

Newsclaf

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COVID-19 STATEMENT

RSCM NSW Branch is committed to the principle that all people who participate in church music activities should be able to do so in safety and without compromising their physical or emotional wellbeing.

As well as being our God-given responsibility to those whom he has placed over us, in the interests of our health and safety during this time of COVID-19, your committee urges all members to follow strictly the requirements of the health authorities and also the guidance provided by our church leaders.



From the Editor

This is our fourth and last issue of Newsclaf for 2020. Despite the difficult circumstances we've all endured this year, I hope you've found something to interest and encourage you in our newsletter, during this time in which we have had to apply innovative approaches and new technologies to our worship. I pray that 2021 will be a full year of gathered worship with church music in all its forms and a resumption of RSCM activities in person.

As the Anglican Dean of Sydney said in his introduction to the St Andrew's Cathedral online service a few weeks ago, "as we meet together, we want to know the peace that comes from the forgiveness and new life that we have in Jesus. We want to hear his word of life, his word of truth, his word of hope. And we want to sing... sing our thanks, our praise and our joy in all we've known of God's love through his son, our Lord Jesus, who lives and reigns and returns."

Next year, when we're in full swing again, I hope you will send in reports of everything you're involved with in church music. Letters to the Editor are always welcome too!

Pamela Summers

Pamela Summers is a chorister at St Swithun's Anglican Church Pymble and Newsclaf Editor



From the Chairman

I wrote in the last edition of Newsclaf, somewhat controversially, of my frustration with the inconsistencies in NSW Health's advice to choirs.

However, I'm writing this as I'm planning my revised music schedule for our Christmas services, rejoicing in the fact that the restrictions on choirs have now been lifted, and even - glory be! - the restrictions on congregational singing have been lifted, albeit still with masks.

As of yet I still haven't heard the congregation sing, but my heart is already lifted as in anticipation for next Sunday. I'm reminded again of some of my favourite verses in Psalm 34: 'Glorify the Lord with me: let us exalt His name **together.**' Worship should never be the preserve of the few, it is the birthright of all Christians to sing their praises to their Redeemer. As William Temple said, 'we are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song'. Well Easter was deprived of song this year, so our Alleluia will thunder forth even more gloriously and passionately this Christmas!

It is good already to reflect on what we have learnt as church musicians during this time. In some ways we have been in the wilderness, and to quote another psalm, it has been difficult knowing 'how to sing the Lord's song in a strange land'.

These are just a few of the reflections that I can offer from the last ten months:

The importance of worship as a gathered community

Yes, of course we love choirs. Yes, chamber groups sound very beautiful, and a level of refinement is much more easily attained than in a larger group. But when the whole people of God are deprived of singing to their Lord, something extraordinary is lost. In 'The Message's' paraphrase of Psalm 34: 'worship opens doors to God's goodness'. I know that we will not take congregational singing for granted again.

The importance of community within our Choirs and music groups

I've been struck, as I know that most of us have, about how much we missed each other when we were not permitted to gather as a choir. Singing on Zoom is all very well (in fact let's be honest - it was awful!) but it did not replace the sense of belonging and fellowship that we have as worshipping groups together physically. A new level of pastoral responsibility has been awakened in us all and we realise that we are there for each other.

Church leaders have realised the importance of music in church

That should be self-explanatory, but I am so encouraged to see people whom I had understood as not being particular fans of music in churches coming out of the woodwork when they realise how much they miss it and their congregations thrive because of it. A greater appreciation of what church music and church musicians bring to church life will be a feature of the next few years. At this point we must acknowledge the great debt that we owe as church musicians to the extraordinary work of the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, Dr Glenn Davies, who has lobbied NSW health on behalf of his congregations to allow choirs and congregational singing to resume, based on the scientific evidence available overseas. He deserves much thanks from us all.

The Web and church music and church services is an amazing asset and here to stay

All of us in churches great and small across the world have been thrown in at the deep end. In some ways it has been heartening to see some of the major cathedrals make the same elementary mistakes that those of us in more lowly places do. The Internet is a great leveller! But all of us have realised that the mission of God can be really enhanced by putting what we do onto the web. And now, due to COVID-19, all of us can do that better than before.

Pre-preparation helps practice go better. In small groups, often one-per-part, the heat is on! Everybody needs to be able to hold their part properly without sitting on the coat tails of the other singer. We're all driving the bus now: no room for any passengers! Because we have had to limit our rehearsal times together with size of ensemble, we have all had to look at our music thoroughly beforehand in order to maximise our time together, and minimise any potential virus transmission time. Our standards have gone right up accordingly.

The need for online music resources

I have long argued, for example with RSCM UK, about making their RSCM printed material available online or for distribution locally in Australia. The huge wait times via the post due to COVID have further underlined this necessity. There must be a better way of getting musical material online without incurring losses for publishers and composers. They need to adapt and survive otherwise the illegal market in scanned music will drive them out of business.

Online video conferencing and teaching resources are here to stay

This again is self-explanatory, but just from a pure RSCM committee viewpoint, we have had some of the best attended committee meetings that we've ever had. Our area committee members in Armidale, Bathurst, Newcastle and Berry have been able to attend meetings regularly. I have been able to attend RSCM UK meetings, and we have all attended online conferences with people from all over Australia about dealing with the coronavirus as musicians. This is a very good thing.

These are just a few of the things that I can think of that have come out of the last ten months.

Obviously much harm has been done and the injuries inflicted on our music will take us all some time to recover from. But on the whole - and giving God much thanks for the way in which He has spared Australia from the ravages of the virus so still rampant elsewhere - I am hopeful that we will soon again renew our song and renew our praises together to our King who has called us out of darkness into his most glorious light. To him be all glory now and forever, Amen.

Ross Cobb

Ross Cobb is the Chairman of RSCM NSW Branch and the National President of RSCM Australia. He is the Organist and Director of Music at St Andrew's Anglican Church Sydney.



Articles



Most of us would be familiar with the compositions of Howard Goodall (born 1958), notably his setting of Psalm 23 which was used as the theme for “The Vicar of Dibley” TV series and his Marlborough Canticles.

In this article written in the UK earlier this year, Goodall discusses the role of music in helping us deal with trauma, and what kind of music might arise out of this pandemic experience we are all going through. Though he speaks about secular as well as sacred music, NewsClef readers will hopefully find his musical observations interspersed with historical information of interest and comfort.

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<https://bylinetimes.com/2020/04/15/hymns-to-the-silence-music-and-solace-in-a-time-of-crisis/>

Hymns to the Silence: Music and Solace in a Time of Crisis

by **Howard Goodall**

15 April 2020

I am sitting at a desk composing, as I have done for most of my life. Some aspects of it feel familiar

— the techniques that have been my bread and butter, structure and form, melodic, rhythmic and harmonic content, orchestration and so on. Other aspects of it are different now, for example, the number of times I ask myself **why I am doing it**. I am pretty sure many of my fellow composers, as well as authors, poets, painters, sculptors, dramatists, are feeling the same disorientation.

First, the obvious self-doubts: we’re not front-line health workers, we’re not feeding people, driving buses, keeping the utilities running or delivering supplies, in fact we’re not essential in any crisis-priority sense. One of our daughters is teaching to multiple online classes at her large London comprehensive school. The other is an epidemiologist working flat out on COVID-19 research. Who is doing vital work in our family at the moment is pretty obvious, and it isn’t the composer dad, I am well aware.

Someone is writing right now, in the midst of this awful crisis, the music we hear that captures our fear, our loss, our perseverance, the courage of those that care for us, the energy of renewal led by a younger generation.

Second, all composers appreciate that performers are in a worse situation since we can still at least *write*, whereas actors, dancers, singers and instrumentalists are physically prevented from getting in

the same room as an audience and doing what they do (notwithstanding the current blossoming of virtual performances and tutoring experiences).

Third, the world is already bursting at the seams with music. There's more music out there, recorded, than a single person could possibly listen to if they started now and listened to something new for the rest of their lives. That said, as people retreat into lockdown they have – quite understandably – defaulted to their favourite playlists, for the comradeship of the familiar, for a reminder of the world they've left behind, where music was so often an expression of joy, of communal warmth, of freedom.

So what role is there for the new and unfamiliar? Who will want the bedroom cantatas, kitchen ballets and garden shed double albums we're cooking up?

From Trauma to Symphony

One assumption we may make is that people in the post-virus world will want escapism. The novelty of mainstream jazz after World War One swept much of the developed world, as did the light-hearted films of Charlie Chaplin, for example, yet that's only part of the story. Silently underpinning the post-war high spirits of the early 1920s was also a deep, dark, aquifer of grief, as millions across Europe lost loved ones to the war and then to the 'flu pandemic of 1918-19. That grief sought expression and solace, and it found both in music.

A lot of it was new music, even though it may seem to us now that, for example, Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending* (composed in 1914) was born old, stylistically speaking. Charles Hubert Parry's uplifting hymn (in support of women's suffrage, initially), *Jerusalem*, composed in 1916, set to Blake's 1804 rallying-cry for what we'd now call Christian Socialism, was followed by his tender *Songs of Farewell* (1916-18), commemorating the deaths of his students and friends in the war. Parry himself died in that 1918-19 'flu pandemic.

The sombre beauty of Elgar's *Cello Concerto* (1919) stands in marked contrast to the confidence and vitality of his Violin Concerto and Second Symphony of the pre-war years. Holst's *The Planets* Suite was composed in 1914-16, and not performed till after the war. In it he captures the dread threat of war, in its thundering first movement, *Mars, the Bringer of War*, and also the possibility of hope and renewal with *Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity*, the movement whose soaring melody was in 1921 adapted to set a poem by British diplomat Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, *I vow to thee, my country*. The original poem was written between 1908 and 1912, significantly revised in 1918 to reflect upon the human sacrifice of the war.

As for World War Two, pacifists Michael Tippett and Benjamin Britten both wrote choral masterpieces whose themes confronted the tragedy of the conflict; Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* was composed between 1939 and 1941 and premièred in March 1944, and Britten's *War Requiem*, composed in 1961-2 for the reconsecration of the rebuilt Coventry Cathedral. Tippett's secular oratorio, *A Child of Our Time*, for which he also wrote the text, was prompted by the *Kristallnacht* pogroms that erupted across Nazi territories in Europe in November 1938.

Perhaps the most famous of all new classical works that were first performed in World War 2, however, is Shostakovich's 7th Symphony, *Leningrad*, dedicated to the people of the city, still besieged by Axis forces when it was first performed in Samara, USSR, March 1942, and actually performed from within

the starving city in August of the same year (loudspeakers played this performance from the Russian front lines outwards to the Nazi forces surrounding them, as an act of defiance). A performance conducted by Arturo Toscanini in New York in July of that year to demonstrate solidarity with Russian allies coincided with Shostakovich being on the front cover of *Time* magazine.

Hope and Discord

The salient point about all the examples above is that they were *brand new* works, not familiar old chestnuts. Indeed, Adrian Boult, who conducted the first public performance of Holst's *The Planets*, thought it unwise to play the whole suite lest audiences became confused, bored or put off by the modernity of the piece, deciding to play only five of the seven movements at the February 1919 première. It was not heard publicly in its full version until November 1920.

At the close of World War Two the world was in shock, as the horrors of the genocides perpetrated in Europe, in the Soviet Union and in the Japanese Empire were exposed, not to mention the detonating of two atomic bombs. This surely explains the angry dissonance of much classical music in the late 40s and 50s and some jazz. Bebop was many things: complex, rhythmically adventurous, harmonically nuanced, improvisational, highly contrapuntal, moody and innovative, but to describe its surge and breakout in the immediate post-war years as escapist fun would not be correct.

To hear live music of untroubled joy in the late 1940s you would probably have had to travel to South America, for example to Brazil to hear samba and bossa nova, or to Cuba to hear mambo, *són* and rumba.

Whilst in both world wars there were plenty of morale-boosting popular songs to distract suffering peoples from the grimness of what was all around them, there were other songs that did not flinch from the sad truths they confronted, none more so than an unexpected 1939 hit, nestled alongside Glenn Miller's dreamy *Moonlight Serenade* and Judy Garland singing *Over the Rainbow*, Abel Meeropol's *Strange Fruit*, sung by Billie Holiday.

Though the USA in 1939 had not yet entered the war, *Strange Fruit* is the exact opposite of an escape from reality, its harrowing subject matter being the lynching of African Americans. Meanwhile, in wartime Britain, Ross Parker and Hughie Charles' *We'll Meet Again* (1939), Tommy Connor & Eddie Pola's *Till the Lights of London Shine Again* (1939), and Walter Kent & Nat Burton's (*There'll be Bluebirds over*) *The White Cliffs of Dover* (1941), all became enormously popular, as did Cole Porter's *Every Time We Say Goodbye*, for an America in 1944 with hundreds of thousands of its service personnel scattered across the globe.

All of these songs are ostensibly about hope, the future, survival. Musically speaking, though, the mood of all of them is an aching melancholy.

Everyone who sang along to Vera Lynn's iconic recording of *We'll Meet Again* during the war knew that the phrase was an aspiration, rather than, for many, a reality. The Queen's name-checking of it during her 5 April Coronavirus broadcast could only have sounded an upbeat tone stripped — as it was — of its music. It should also be remembered that one of the best-selling record releases of 1944 was Kathleen Ferrier singing *Che Faro?*, from (German, note) composer Christoph Gluck's 1762 opera,

Orfeo ed Euridice, its English lyrics asking, poignantly: *What is life to me without you?/What is left if you are dead?/What is life without my love?*

The Need to Commemorate and Mourn

After this pandemic is over many will want to enjoy their music collectively, loudly, joyfully, as they did before the crisis. There will be other emotional needs to address, though. Some will need to mourn the loss of loved ones, to grieve together.

Music will be central to those commemorations. There will be new music commissioned in memory of those that have died. Like our ancestors before us, we will want this tragedy to be marked and for the sacrifice and bravery of others not to go unnoticed. Music will be part of that tribute. This time, alongside their patients, the fallen will so often be doctors and nurses. Punctuating our sorrow will be ricochets of anger at political failures and incompetences. Novels and dramas will be written to help us investigate, debate and move forward.

This time... the fallen will so often be doctors and nurses. Punctuating our sorrow will be ricochets of anger at political failures and incompetences. Novels and dramas will be written to help us investigate, debate and move forward.

The huge social cost of unemployment in hitherto working-class communities that scarred the UK in the late 1970s and early 80s was brilliantly dissected and humanised in *Boys from the Blackstuff* (1980-2) by Alan Bleasdale, and the film (2000) then musical of *Billy Elliot* (2005-), the dynamic conflict of which partly came from its sub-plot centred on the 1984-5 Miners' Strike, have been able to remind subsequent generations what these traumatic political events meant to the affected communities.

The defining artwork of the post-virus period of renewal might be a film, a play, or a musical drama. The Spanish Civil War was chillingly evoked in (and symbolised by) a painting, Picasso's *Guernica*. The AIDS pandemic produced Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart*, Matthew Lopez' *The Inheritance* and Jonathan Larson's musical *Rent* (itself based on Puccini's opera *La Bohème*) on the stage alone. I was struck when I visited South African schools in 2006 how singing was being used throughout the school day, in all age groups, to educate children how they could survive the pandemic there.

The Voice of the Future

Music has had a long association with healing, both as therapy and as catharsis. The Civil Rights movement in America is unthinkable without the songs that became its inextinguishable voice, and the centuries of slavery that preceded it were accompanied by the singing of spirituals. *Go Down, Moses* may re-tell a 2600-year-old legend of desert exile but to the slaves that sang it in 19th century America it was as heart-wrenchingly contemporary a cry as it could possibly be: *let my people go...* The sound of

music not as mere entertainment, but music as a lifeline, music as witness to injustice, music as the hope of survival and redemption.

To give thanks for his survival from the 1346-53 Black Death (which claimed an estimated 60% of Europe's population), the French poet and composer Guillaume de Machaut composed *Messe de Notre Dame*, for Reims Cathedral, where he took a new job after his isolation. It wouldn't have been 'popular', or a 'hit' in the modern sense, nor would anyone any distance from Reims have known about it at the time but it is remarkably still with us, still performed, still meaningful to those that sing or hear it. You can find several recordings of it, 670 years later. That is some memorial to his time.

So I am holding on to this. None of us knows what will be remembered or cherished from our time by future generations, and that goes for all artistic endeavour. On 16th March 1750, George Frideric Handel's penultimate oratorio, *Theodora*, was produced in London in difficult circumstances. The previous of his 20 or so oratorios and 40-odd operas seen in London had been mostly great successes, so the dreadful flop of *Theodora* was both unexpected and distressing to the 65-year-old composer.

Why were its performances next to empty? Well, London experienced an earthquake shortly before the première, part of the tectonic disturbances that resulted, catastrophically, in the Lisbon earthquake and tsunami of November 1755. So Handel's well-to-do audience fled to the country, with the Bishop of London's admonition that it was God's punishment for their depravity ringing in their ears. *Theodora* contains music of heartbreaking beauty. *Theodora's* facing death with the aria, *Angels, ever bright and fair, Take, O Take me to your Care* is one of the loveliest things Handel ever wrote, in a crowded field. And yet, *Theodora*, shunned by contemporary audiences, quickly sank into musical oblivion. It was re-discovered and revived, often staged as an opera, starting in the 1960s, and has finally been recognised for the masterpiece it is. That's a long wait.

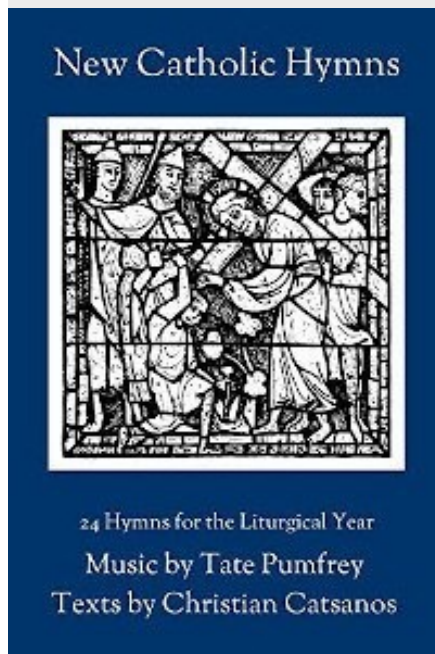
So it's as well not to second guess what posterity will embrace and what it will ditch. But something that someone is writing right now, in the midst of this awful crisis, will be the music we hear that captures our fear, our loss, our perseverance, the courage of those that care for us, the energy of renewal led by a younger generation. Something someone is writing will be the voice of our time, for all time.

Apart from anything else, we are all discovering that when we stand on the edge of an abyss, everything dissolves down, ultimately, to love. Not just romantic or familial love, either. Nurses holding a stranger's hand – in the absence of their family – as they die, in COVID-19 wards right now are demonstrating a profound, selfless compassion that humbles us all.

How else do we articulate our love and our gratitude, for those dearest to us and those whose names we don't know, than in poems, in books, in films, in plays, operas, symphonies, cantatas and musicals, in paintings, in sculptures, in dance, and perhaps most of all, in song? *Love is all you need.*



And now an article about RSCM NSW member, Christian Catsanos. This article is reprinted with kind permission of the author from Corpus Christi Watershed (<https://www.ccwatershed.org/2020/06/27/new-catholic-hymns-24-hymns-for-the-liturgical-year/>)



New Catholic Hymns: 24 Hymns for the Liturgical Year

by Veronica Brandt

June 27, 2020

Two young men from opposite sides of the world recently released a new collaboration in the form of a collection of 24 hymns. Christian Catsanos wrote the words from Australia and Tate Pumfrey composed the music from Canada.

I have had the pleasure of singing with Christian in the past and thought this would be a grand opportunity to write about this new book and his side of its origins.

In September 2004 a concert at Sydney Town Hall inspired him to pursue sacred music. A few months later he composed his first hymn at the age of 11 – a Christmas carol.

Christian grew up singing in the school choir. The high school choir exposed him to high quality liturgical music, preparing for the weekly school Masses. The school had a student organist who was graduating, so Christian volunteered to take his place and was accepted. His background in piano stood him in good stead and his organ playing flourished.

Now Christian plays the organ and last year earned an Associate of Trinity College, London and is currently preparing for his Licentiate under the tutelage of Mr Peter Kneeshaw AM.

His two great mentors in liturgy and sacred music have been Dr Richard Connolly and Mrs Donrita Reefman.

The book of hymns grew from a chance encounter on Facebook where Tate Pumfrey asked for words to go with his hymn tunes. Christian Catsanos responded and over the next two years produced these twenty-four pieces



covering all the major feasts.

Many hymns show the influence of Gregorian chant. My favourite example is this *Salve Regina* which started with Tate's hymn tune based on the simple Gregorian chant antiphon.

Christian's words arrange the *Salve Regina* into three verses with the refrain:

Hail, holy Queen, our sov'reign be;
Salve, Regina, hail to thee.



Click on the photos above and at right to listen.

Rhymes in the English language have changed over time. Occasionally one finds a hymn which rhymes words like “die” with words like “eternity”. This hymnbook employs this freedom with an Advent hymn for Laetare Sunday. Here is the fourth verse:

“So, upon this day so holy,
we our Lætare do cry;
through our penitence so lowly,
we shall know the victory;
and, our hearts employing wholly,
shall we praise the Trinity!”

Verse 4, *Sing a hymn of exultation* for Lætare Sunday

I asked Christian whether, in his opinion, these words should be sung to rhyme (for example, victor-eye, Trini-tie) or as they are usually pronounced. He gave the practical answer that although for a formal rendition it would be more meaningful to preserve the rhyme, these hymns are made for congregational use and most people will pronounce them as they are accustomed and that is fine too.

Most Precious Blood of Our Lord

This following hymn is written in honour of Jesus' Most Precious Blood, whose feast day was on Wednesday, 1st of July.

O Jesus, who for man below,
In such a mighty flood,
Poured streams of crimson, for to flow,
His precious, precious Blood;
The self-same Blood, in form of wine,
He gave before He died,
Was then out poured in love divine,
When He was crucified.

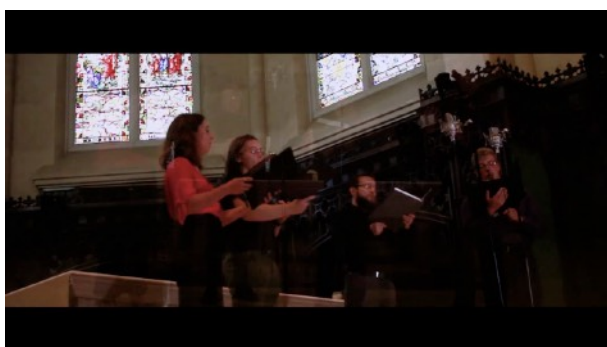


1st verse, *O Jesus Who for Man Below* by Tate Pumfrey and Christian Catsanos

Lastly I asked Christian: “What is the best part of composing hymns?” He answered the question with this piece on the vocation of hymnodists from a speech he gave last year:

Saint Augustine says, “One who sings well prays twice.” I truly believe this, and it sums up why the vocation of hymnodists, because we are the people whom God has set apart from the rest of His flock to bring sacred music into the temporal world, is so important. It is beyond me to say whether the sacred music known upon earth will be sung in heaven, or whether there are hymnodists among the choirs of angels who have written that which will be sung at the eternal feast. What I know for certain, though, is that the hymnodists marked by God and set among His flock but apart from the rest of His flock, bring many people to the eternal feast, because they have enabled many to sing well and pray twice; and no one who claims himself for Christ but makes his life devoid of prayer can be fit for the Kingdom of God.

Christian Catsanos from a speech on his 15th anniversary as a hymnodist in 2019



One last recording from the hymnbook, a Eucharistic hymn, *O Blest the Man who Eats of Thee*.

The hymnbook, *New Catholic Hymns: 24 Hymns for the Liturgical Year*, is available from [Amazon.com.au](https://www.amazon.com.au)

Denominational Report

Uniting Church in Australia



Musicians have always had to work hard in the private sphere to bring to flower what we experience in public.

Lately, there's been much less of the public, at least in the sense of live physical sharing. Publication is another matter. Here are a few recent random examples from the Uniting Church.

Dr Glen Powell is Executive Director at Uniting Mission and Education in the NSW Synod. In years past, he was a key element of the band The Quick and the Dead. COVID-19 gave him time out in April to make a lyric video for a song, *Gethsemane*, which he'd written in 1983 at 18 and recorded in 1996. These days, Glen collaborates cross-generationally, encouraging younger people also to sing a new song.



Vika and Linda Bull have just released *The Gospel According to Iso*, drawing from their Tongan cultural and faith traditions. These gospel songs again were recorded during COVID-19. Some of the most active music-making in the UCA is due to Pacific or East Asian musical energies.

<https://vimeo.com/468079173>



In Queensland, Rev David McGregor has just unwrapped his new book, *Songs of Solace & Sorrow: a pandemic experience*. It's a departure from his usual focus on songs, including 14 piano solos among 24 pieces that include reflection and images.



With just voice and guitar, Rev Beverly Matthews often drops musical offerings to those in her Facebook group from the church office in Croydon. Just really for local church and friends, but that includes family back in homeland Canada.

One very musical minister, Rev Michael Earl in Bowral, has written a poignant but faith-affirming hymn about our corporate song life that will remind us of these times. It's set, tellingly, to the tune, *How can I keep from singing?*

Church in Changing Times 17 - A Pandemic Hymn: In Gentle Witness

(to the tune 'How Can I Keep From Singing' - 87 87 and refrain)

In Gentle Witness

1. In gentle witness, quiet hope,
in myriad pilgrims yearning,
the scattered church, her hymns subdued,
goes on, to God, returning.

With muffled songs of joy and praise,
and muted bells still ringing,
with hearts of faith, and strains of prayer,
the voice of Christ is singing.

2. In human cries, in darkened hours,
in grief and lamentation,
the Spirit's power draws ever near,
to break the isolation.

Refrain

3. In wards of mercy, gowns of grace,
a company of healing,
the weak, with tender touch, attends,
God's holy face revealing.

Refrain

4. In all the struggle, and the strife,
as all the world's in hiding,
the love of God makes no retreat,
but ever is abiding.

Refrain

Words: © Rev Michael Earl

Pandemic Pragmatics

At St Stephen's Macquarie Street

(SSMS), development of all musicians has been a hallmark, and continues. The choral scholars have been on roster, with one singing a hymn and solo each Sunday. Nico Tjoelker, the organ scholar, has been playing the organ and Mark Quarmby has been playing the piano, harpsichord and celesta. As Mark has explained, this saves time having to sanitise between items, which would be required if sharing the same keyboard. Mark reports his resultant excursion into virtuosic piano hymn arrangements, which have been played during the service in place of sung hymns. They are being received very enthusiastically by the congregation.

At the time of writing, NSW Health had very restrictive choral recommendations in place. Prior to that, SSMS was making use of their recently donated Roland digital harpsichord for the accompaniment of physically distanced choristers in the back gallery.

At Burwood-Croydon, we are still presently not meeting physically, but via Zoom. I have been unhappy about the status quo with hymns, which is that I sing as I play the organ. Although I co-opt my mother and wife, it still falls to me to achieve rather too much for my brain. I often interline the words between the staves (US hymnal-style) by scanning music into Microsoft Publisher and adding the necessary text boxes.

I've noted a recently-introduced "Hi-Fi" setting in Zoom that allows for a better audio experience if Original Sound is on. It does call for an Ethernet cable connection.

I very much valued the contributions from Barb Griffin of Goulburn and the article from St Alban's Epping in the last Newsclaf. Our local adaptation of 'virtual choir' is close to the Epping model, but with a video lead for each part shared first, along the lines of the RSCM Centre advice video from St Martins-in-the-Fields. At one time, I was producing preparation videos where my midriff was overlaid with a scrolling stave, courtesy of functions supplied by MuseScore and ScreenCastify (both freely available). No need then to look away from the singer/conductor! (Admittedly, however, this won't work effectively until the playhead can be centrally positioned to allow an ongoing view of upcoming words.) Independent parts are distributed as PDFs, explicitly notating rests and extensions (a courtesy I recall from Katherine Dienes-Williams in the Canberra Summer School). The opportunity exists to give any congregant every chance to learn the things we learn in a choir. Participants' voices are emailed in as m4a audio files and I overlay them into another video with lyric slides so that for one song each service, the congregation hears a prepared 'choral' lead. I've noted big improvements in pitch placement and timing over the weeks.

Zoom services allow the people to sing in their loungerooms. As we move towards meeting physically, the muting of congregational singers will be difficult. We plan to maintain the prepared 'virtual choir' item so that for one segment at least, an open invitation remains to combine all voices in praise.

David Powell

David Powell is a member of the Uniting Church in Australia Church Music Committee and UCA Representative on the RSCM Branch Committee since 2011



Regional Report

A report from the Anglicans in Armidale

Armidale is a city of around twenty thousand people located about five hours' drive north of Sydney, and about three hours west of Coffs Harbour. It is the centre of the Anglican Diocese of Armidale, a mostly rural diocese, with the major towns being Armidale, Tamworth, Gunnedah, Inverell and Moree. There are two Anglican choirs that normally meet regularly (Tamworth and Armidale) and others that are occasional - for Christmas for example.

Armidale itself is a very musical city, with Fiori Musicale (choir by invitation), a choral society, a musical society, an annual choral foundation weekend (practising & performing with Paul Holley and the Armidale Symphony Orchestra), New England Conservatorium children's choirs and chorale, school choirs, a chapel choir at The Armidale School (TAS), a pub choir, several church choir groups (and bands of course), and a very enjoyable choir night at the annual Armidale Eisteddfod. (By the way, NOT country music – that's Tamworth!!)

St Peter's Cathedral Evensong Choir normally sings once a month at a traditional 1662 Book of Common Praise Evensong Service.

As for many others choirs, 2020 has been a tumultuous year of extreme highs and lows. Like most choirs, we were very busy until earlier this year – and we have been doing very little since March 2020. So this report tries to provide a summary of our activities to then.

At our monthly evensongs, we would sing four hymns with the congregation, and sing a psalm, a Magnificat (Mary's song from Luke) and Nunc Dimittis (Simeon's song also from Luke) plus two items – an introit at the beginning and an anthem in the middle. In other words, lots of passages from God's word, and various Christian persons' reflections, prayers or praise from across the last two millennium.

We love to sing songs that are from the breadth of more than fifteen centuries, whose writers express their Christian faith in the music style of their different eras, including the current. We find the words still resonate with us today.

We aim to express the faith of the words we sing, and to encourage one another to believe those words.

We usually rehearse weekly, and have enjoyed contributions from other musicians including organists Tim Godden (from Tamworth, who came to *Sydney inSpires*), Warwick Dunham and Lena Schmalz, soloists Dakota Love & Sarah Adeney and instrumentalists Luke Larsen, John Hadfield, Nick Hadfield, (brass) Kees Grenyer (percussion), Graham Maddox and Kelvin Nganga (oboes) and Gerard Larkin (flute).

One of our singers, Sue Webb, who regularly sang solos, went to Newcastle for medical treatment. When she returned to Armidale hospital, we sang to her in the ward a couple of times, and then weekly at the nursing home until prevented by the COVID-19 restrictions. We have been told other patients & residents also enjoyed our singing. We are considering doing this more often when choirs are back in action.

Sue was invariably trusting in our Lord in her own difficult situation, and ministered to us probably more than we to her. Unfortunately, due to the very severe restrictions at the time, none of us were able to go to her funeral. It has been wonderful to hear that the faith she expressed has had lasting effects on other people. We rejoice in the Christian witness of such a self effacing, delightful and faithful woman.

Other than our normal monthly evensong services, we have participated in the following events:



July 2019 - RSCM *Sydney inSpires* conference. We were told that we were the largest group from a church choir, and had the merit of the youngest there (Fiona May's 1 year old son who was adored by many), as well as being the most nationally diverse (Kenya, and two from Hong Kong). Kelvin, a gap student from Kenya, had the opportunity to sit at the organ in the Opera House, and sang with John Rutter, and in the Sydney Town Hall, all of which were really memorable for him. He had a fantastic time – including eating amazing Korean food with Polly!

Polly Wong originally booked for the clergy stream, but came instead to the choir stream, as she used to sing regularly in our choir. She and Fiona had a wonderful ministry shepherding some of the younger participants at the conference. You may wish to pray for her as she has returned to Hong Kong for family reasons.

In August we joined with the TAS chapel choir at St Mary's patronal festival (and out centre of St Peters) , as we have done other years.

Early October 2019, we went to Tamworth to join the choir at St John's, which is part of our wonderful relationship between the two choirs.

In November 2019, we sang as part of the University of New England (UNE) residential unit: “Sin, Sex and Heresy in the 4th to 11th Centuries”. We sang Christian songs from those centuries, with the music from three being from that era, as well as Be Thou My Vision, whose words are from that period but whose music is much more recent. Dr Jason Stossel from UNE music department spoke about the history of plainsong and the theology of some of those songs. We had the pleasure of a wonderful young local soloist, Sarah Adeney, who sang some verses in Latin for us. We all really enjoyed sitting in on the discussions and question time with Martin Trotman, Rev. Phil Brown (from Moree), Father Paul McCabe and Professor Thomas Fudge.



In mid-December 2019, we continued to be a part of the Combined Churches Choir at the Christmas Lessons and Carols. We had a full house again, including brass, percussion and a choir of about 60. We sang at the Uniting Church in the morning and at the Anglicans in the evening.

In early March this year, the choir at St John's Tamworth came up to us. Tim Godden played for us as he does at other occasions as well.

So from a very busy 9 months, we are down to almost zero activity! Although Zoom is a reasonably good option for meetings, music does not transmit well, as any music teacher will corroborate. We do not have the time or technical gear or ability to create a virtual choir with click tracks and overlays and the rest!!

The only thing we have been doing is having up to five singers sing at a time, at one venue that is transmitted live to the zoom congregation. This has been much more relaxed, as we only sing three hymns, but we do it each week for an out centre service of about 35 regular attendees. A couple of choir members who regularly sing for this group bring their little boy who is 1 year old. He sometimes can be heard singing with us, which has been delightful. We can only hope that he still wants to sing with us in the years ahead!

The future is yet unclear as to choral singing in general. Some churches have still run a choir, singing at some distance where the building is able to allow that. For us here at St Peter's, it is a bit more problematic, and we are still working through what direction the future will take. The singers don't want evensong to be just a performance, but to be within the strong congregational singing element involved. And our Diocese rules this out at the moment, anyway.

Ultimately, we know that the future is not in our hands, but in the One who controls all things. We have to “rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him”.

This pandemic has actually had some positive aspects: we are forced to recognise the importance of social interaction, and that causes us to reflect on our relationships and how to best maintain them, both within the choir and the congregation. From both a music and ministry of the Word perspective, we can listen to myriad options online, some of which can be far better than we could ever be. Music that is corporate is the hardest to do outside of a physical environment. Singing by oneself whilst listening online at home, is not quite the same! So the future of church music, and choral music in particular will be an ongoing conversation!

And as we think about online and recorded services we could consider the possibility of how to use these resources in an outreach into the community. The grey baby boomers are a very large group of people who may be able to be reached at home and in retirement or nursing homes in a completely new and different way.

Lots of ideas and challenges into the future!

Megan Ainsworth

Megan Ainsworth is the RSCM NSW Northern Region representative

News of Members



RSCM CELEBRATION DAY 2020

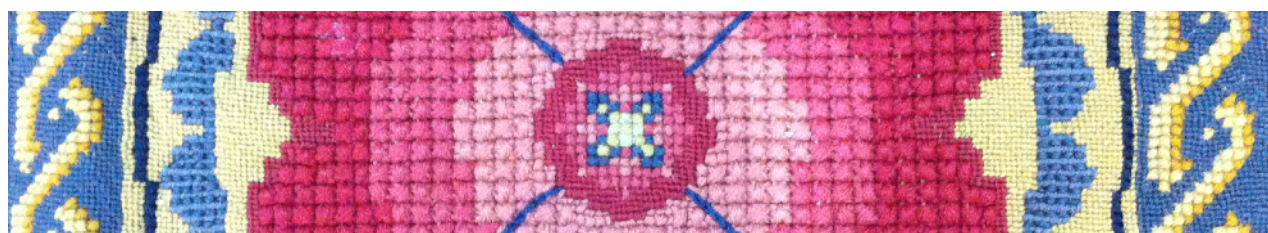
Saturday 24 October 2020

Congratulations again to our Chairman, **Ross Cobb**, who was honoured at the RSCM Celebration Day service in the UK on 24 October 2020, being made an Associate of the Royal School of Church Music (ARSCM).

Hugh Morris, Director of the RSCM, read the following about Ross:

“Ross Cobb has served as both President of RSCM Australia and Chair of RSCM NSW Branch for several years, in addition to being Organist and Director of Music at St Andrew’s Anglican Cathedral, Sydney. Through education and example, he has used his communication skills to promote high standards in music to enhance Christian worship across Australia through many high-profile RSCM activities, most notably *Sydney inSpires*.”

Congratulations also to the South Australian members, **Graham Bell** and **Warren Bourne**, who were awarded Certificates of Special Service.



Congratulations and celebrations!

Very best wishes to our NSW and National Treasurer, Gerald Hayes, on the recent celebration of his Diamond Wedding Anniversary.

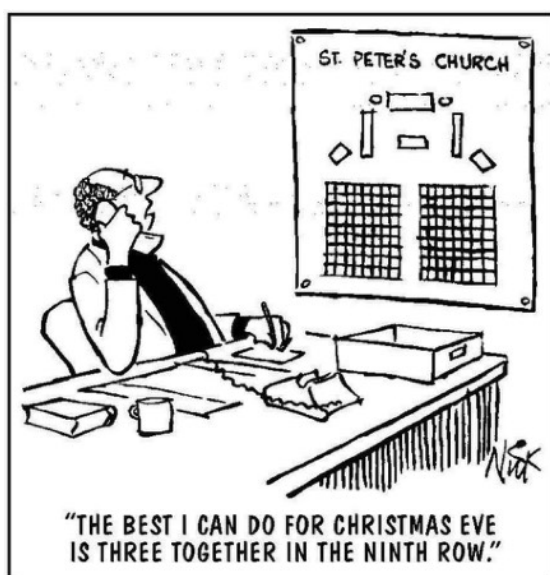
Gerry and Margaret were married 60 years ago at St George's Anglican Church, Earlwood in Sydney.

Margaret and Gerry have a shared love of church music, and their bridesmaid (Margaret Thomson, leading lady at Bankstown Theatrical Society) performed a lovely solo at the ceremony.

Margaret was organist at several churches from 1960 until 2011 (including St George's Earlwood, St Thomas' Rozelle and the final 35 years at St Clement's Marrickville). Gerry has sung bass at several churches from 1977 until the current day (starting off with St Andrew's Cathedral Choir followed by St James Choir, St Paul's Burwood Choir and The Mater Chorale).

Their children have also been involved in church music, their daughter, Carolyn, at Meriden and their son, Stephen, was a chorister in the St Andrew's Cathedral Choir.

We add our congratulations to those of her Majesty, the Queen, on this wonderful milestone.



And finally a little pandemic humour...

Sadly this has turned out to be our reality for Christmas 2020.

Ed: nice to see the Rector is a left hander.



ST PAUL'S ANGLICAN CHURCH
Burwood

CHRISTMAS @ ST PAUL'S **2020**

Sunday 20 December – Carol Service

5:00pm service of readings, lessons and carols
celebrating the Christmas Season

Thursday 24 December – Christmas Eve

9:30pm Choral Eucharist

Friday 25 December – Christmas Day

9:00am Choral Eucharist

The Choir of St Paul's Anglican Church, Burwood

For more information please visit www.stpaulsburwood.org.au

ST PAUL'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

205-207 Burwood Road Burwood NSW 2134 | PO Box 530 Burwood NSW 1805
stpaulsburwood.org.au | (02) 9747 4327 | info@stpaulsburwood.org.au

Fr James Collins Rector



Many Voices, One in Song

ANCA National Research Conference

6 & 7th March 2021

Conservatorium High School, Sydney

The Australian National Choral Association is pleased to announce a national research conference in Voice & Choral Singing. The conference is an opportunity to bring together choral directors, music and singing teachers, singers, voice practitioners and researchers in a collegial, informative conference setting.



Performance

From *Eight million years of choral development* to *The Pursuit of Better Intonation in A Cappella Choral Singing* the conference Performance theme sees contributions from Universities of Western Australian Queensland, Auckland, Griffith and the Sydney Conservatorium.



Community

The Big Sing in the Desert, Estonian Singing traditions as community-building and Choral experience through musical unity and ensemble community feature presenters from the Universities of Adelaide, The Australian National University and Macquarie University.



Education

From an Early Learning composition project with Stephen Leek to *Managing Adolescent Voices in Australian Mixed-Voice Secondary School Choir* and on to *A Snapshot of Australian Transgender Singers in the Applied Voice Studio* the universities of Melbourne, Newcastle and Queensland present education focussed research.



Faith & Worship

From *Historically informed performance practice in J.S. Bach Cantatas* to the *Enduring Impacts of Cathedral Choral Training on Choristers' Lives*, Monash University and The Sydney Conservatorium are among the Faith & Worship presentations.

Full program of Presenters, topics and workshops at <https://anca.org.au/events>



CONSERVATORIUM
HIGH SCHOOL
Fiat lux

Participants in the Organ stream at *Sydney inSpires* will remember Anne Marsden Thomas. Anne has written over twenty books for organists and is one of the most influential organ teachers of today. In 2017, she was the first woman to receive the Royal College of Organists' highest distinction, the RCO Medal. Her latest publication is *The New Oxford Organ Method*.

OXFORD
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The New Oxford Organ Method

Anne Marsden Thomas and Frederick Stocken

“

A natural successor to C. H. Trevor... This contemporary and comprehensive *Method* will help shape the student's learning journey, providing a framework of repertoire that is holistic and relevant.

David Titterington, Head of Organ, Royal Academy of Music and Professor, University of London

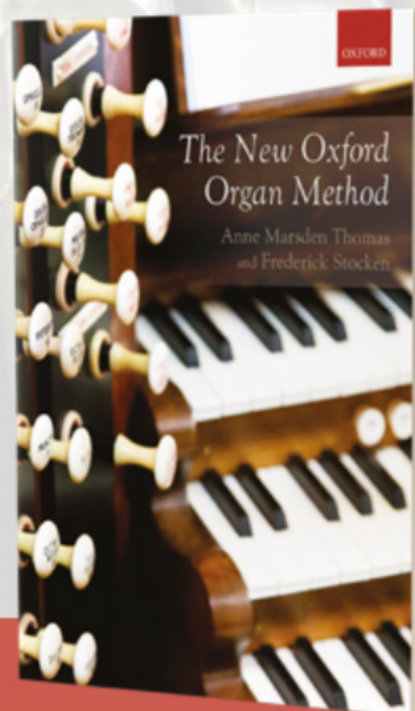
”

An inspired approach to learning

The New Oxford Organ Method is a comprehensive method book from Oxford written by two renowned and highly-respected authors who both bring a lifetime of professional experience of teaching and performing.

The *Method* places organ repertoire at its centre, using carefully selected pieces as the basis for learning. By teaching technique through the music the book equips players to make a direct connection between the pieces they encounter and the techniques which lead to a musical performance.

- Designed for use as a teaching resource or for self-study purposes
- Each chapter focuses on a single piece, covering four main topics: practice methods, registration, fingering and pedalling, and historically-informed interpretation
- Attractive pieces include works by J. S. Bach, Buxtehude, Franck, Reger, and Walton
- Companion website offers extensive additional resources to enhance learning



RSCM Choristers' Prayer

*Bless, O Lord, us Thy servants
who minister in Thy temple.
Grant that what we sing with our
lips, we may believe in our hearts,
and what we believe in our hearts,
we may show forth in our lives.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

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