

## Parish of Central Windsor Music Report 2024

During 2024, our music benefitted from strengthening links with neighbouring parishes, schools and other community organisations. We finally put the lingering effects of Covid behind us, and enjoyed the first full year following the 2021-23 restoration of the organ in Windsor Parish Church of St John the Baptist. There were many memorable musical occasions across all four churches:

- Ascensiontide festival jointly with Stockholm Cantus including Choral Eucharist on Ascension Day (Schubert in G) and concert on the Saturday following
- Pimm's & Hymns event in June, and Choral Evensongs for Epiphany, Eastertide, Trinity and Harvest preceded by afternoon teas
- Stainer's Crucifixion on Palm Sunday with many visiting singers, marking a full recovery to pre-Covid numbers
- Solemn Eucharist for Corpus Christi (Darke in F), a liturgical performance of Fauré's Requiem for All Souls, and the Deanery Confirmation, with visitors from St Peter's, Burnham, All Saints Boyne Hill and other local choirs
- RBWM civic services for Battle of Britain and Remembrance, and a special ATC service in April
- Intimate evening services on Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday and our Taizé-style Eucharist in September
- Patronal Festival services, including the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St Stephen's Church at which we sang one of the Choir's favourite anthems, 'Song of Mary', a setting of the Magnificat by R Shephard
- Five organ recitals on the restored WPC organ: Relf Clark in a Friends' of WPC event in February; John Halsey on Good Friday (first of the three hours) and a lunchtime recital marking the Feast of St John the Baptist; a recital by Henry Smith in June, and a Windsor Festival recital by Richard Pinel marking the first anniversary of the organ's restoration
- A Schools' Coffee Concert as part of Windsor Festival, the first time that this event has been held since Covid, and a Box & Fir concert of music for organ, harpsichord and flute as part of Windsor Festival Fringe
- Many musical events organised by external groups in our churches, including 23 concerts / masterclasses and 6 school carol services at Windsor Parish Church of St John the Baptist alone
- Visits from The Incorporated Society of Organ Builders, The Organ Club and Berkshire Organists' Association
- Two very well attended Carols by Candlelight services with choir, organ and the Band of the Household Cavalry; for the first time, the Team Choir sang one, and Voci chamber choir the other
- Carol singing events in Windsor Guildhall and La Planchette wine bar, with members of the Team Choir and Windsor & Eton Choral Society
- Two RBWM Living Advent Windows carol singing events, one with the Welsh Guards Choir, and one with the Team Choir

Drawing up this list causes me to reflect on the importance of collaborations to our social and worshipping life; collaborations between our four churches, collaborations with other nearby parishes, collaborations with schools, and collaborations with other community choirs near and far. A second reflection is how many of the highlights were not on Sunday mornings! Keep your eyes open for advertising for special events in 2025!

## **Organs and organists**

A presentation was made to Oliver Lomberg on 18<sup>th</sup> August as he completed many years as organist of St Stephen & St Agnes and across the Team, before moving to live in Austria. Nat Keiller was appointed to take Oliver's place. Michal Peczak was appointed as sixth-form Organ Scholar for two years from September.

Routine maintenance was carried out on all four pipe organs during the year. A footrest was added to the organ bench at St Stephen & St Agnes.

## **Choir**

The church choir continue to rehearse most Friday evenings for an hour, with additional short pre-service rehearsals. We said goodbye to Adrian & Veronica Stabbins after many years of service, as they have moved to Winchester. The funeral of former choir member Diana Bolt was held in November. A small number of singers have joined or re-joined during the year. We thrive on special occasions, as listed above, when we are often joined by visiting singers.

Soloists and small professional choirs have been assembled on a handful of occasions, when requested for weddings, funerals or memorial services.

A successful and well-attended Choir Christmas Lunch was again held at the Palmer's Arms, Dorney, subsidised by the Choir Fund.

## **Music choices**

Selection of music for our worship is discussed and agreed between the Rector and the Director of Music. A Music List for the whole Team Ministry is published each month, including hymns, psalms, Communion settings and anthems. The Music List and Choir Diary are published on the Team website.

Music choices are constrained by the limitations of our vocal resources, but we do keep five Communion service settings in the repertoire (congregational settings by Thorne, Murray and Shephard, and choral settings by Schubert and Darke), plus several Evensong canticles settings and many anthems. Each year I aim to include a few new, inspiring and challenging works, which can attract and motivate, particularly on special occasions. In 2024, we introduced Finzi's Ascensiontide anthem 'God is gone up' and the Preces & Responses arranged from Stanford by Jeremy Dibble, marking the centenary of Stanford's death in 1924.

## **Funding our music**

Enabled by a deed of variation on my mother's will, I have been in the fortunate position during 2024 to make two donations to help fund our music:

1. £30,000 to boost the '2031 centenary' fund towards restoration of the All Saints organ; this restricted fund is also receiving regular donations from another parishioner; at year-end 2024, the fund stood at c. £34,000
2. £2,500 creating a small designated fund to support concerts promoted by the parish.