

Diocese of Galloway - Music Core Group

21 January 2004

To all Parish Musicians

Dear Everyone

Here's hoping you all had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year (or a Happy Christmas and a Merry New Year - whichever way round it is supposed to be!)

We are pleased to welcome a new member to the core group, Margaret Sharkey from St Brendan's parish, Saltcoats. Margaret has been playing the organ and organising the music there for four years.

The years seem to pass by ever more quickly, and we are already thinking about events for 2004.

PAST EVENTS

Saturday 25 October

A workshop was held at Smithstone House, and we looked at the role of music in the liturgy during the season of Advent. Mr Paul Wellicome, from the Society of St Gregory, had travelled from Leamington Spa to lead the day. The Society has been in existence for more than seventy years and fosters understanding and active participation in the Liturgy of the Church.

Paul explained his own background in parish music ministry and as a part-time composer. His talents were immediately obvious as he demonstrated the importance of good contemporary and traditional Church music. The season of Advent (which seems so long ago now!) is one of 'joyful hope' as we await and celebrate the threefold coming of the Lord; in ourselves, in time at the Incarnation, and at the end of all time. Everyone present learned how to sing many new songs to the Lord and, if the old adage about praying twice is true, had a very prayerful time too!

Our thanks are due once again to all at Smithstone House who helped make the day a success.

FUTURE EVENTS AND DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Smithstone House on Saturday 20 March

Our first workshop for 2004 will be held at Smithstone House, and publicity materials are included in this mailing. We are pleased that Bishop Taylor will be leading the morning session on planning music for the combined celebration of Confirmation and First Eucharist; in particular how we can help express liturgically and musically the importance and significance of both Sacraments.

In the afternoon Fr Stephen Motroni will lead us with reflections on Pentecost, and Michael McCulloch and Eleanor Glen Kelly will introduce us to some new worship songs and choruses.

St Teresa's, Dumfries on Saturday 22 May

Again, we are delighted that Bishop Taylor will be able to join us. The programme will be similar to that being planned for 20 March.

Later in the year

We hope, as usual, to hold a second workshop at Smithstone House in September or October. Then there will be the annual open air Mass on Sunday 15 August. Any other suggestions for events or workshops you would like to see organised will be gladly received.

OTHER EVENTS THAT MAY BE OF INTEREST

There's not much going on at this time of year, but our next newsletter will provide an update of what other organisations are planning for the spring and summer.

YOUR FAVOURITE HYMNS . . .

Since the basic text of this newsletter was drafted before Christmas, and Christmas wasn't all that long ago, we've chosen a Christmas carol, **Silent night**.

- 1 Silent night, holy night.
All is calm, all is bright,
round yon virgin mother and child;
holy infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace,
sleep in heavenly peace.

- 2 Silent night, holy night.
Shepherds quake at the sight,
glories stream from heaven afar,
heav'nly hosts sing alleluia:
Christ, the Saviour is born,
Christ, the Saviour is born.

- 3 Silent night, holy night.
Son of God, love's pure light,
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace:
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

In 1818 the church organ at Oberndorf, Austria, had broken down on Christmas eve, so the assistant priest, Joseph Mohr, jotted down the poem 'Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht!' in six stanzas, and asked the organist, Franz Gruber, to write a tune for it. It was sung that day, with

village girls singing the melody, Mohr playing guitar and singing tenor, and Gruber singing bass.

Unfortunately, the weakness of this hymn is that it is very much a translation of the original German. In fact there are lots of translations in different hymn books, and this can even make it hard to find in indexes - 'Still the night' is very different from 'Silent night'. The English words are very much 'forced' to fit the tune and even the rhythm is different for some of the different translations. Looking at the above, the third line of the first verse 'round yon virgin mother and child' is usually sung as if it is a line on its own, when in reality detached from the second line it makes no sense at all. And what does 'radiant beams from thy holy face' mean in the third verse?

These comments notwithstanding, it is probably the most popular of all Christmas carols.

BOOK REVIEWS

How to be a successful choir director by John Bertalot

Dr John Bertalot has been a professional musician for over 40 years and this has included in Northampton (where he worked at St Matthew's Church and was conductor of the Northampton Bach Choir and Symphony Orchestra), as director of music at Blackburn Cathedral, and in Princeton, New Jersey (where he led one of the most ambitious Episcopal Church music programmes in the USA, and founded the Princeton Singers). For eighteen years he was also a Senior Lecturer at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, where he taught choir training, music history, composition and counterpoint.

The book is divided up in to lots of helpful short chapters, and the author's extensive background in church music means that it is very relevant for people working with amateur choirs in church situations. Definitely worth reading - either to convince you that you are on the right 'track', or to provide you with helpful pointers to think about and develop what you are doing.

Spring Harvest Praise 2003

Spring Harvest is a residential holiday/conference attended by people from (non Catholic) Christian backgrounds, and an annual songbook of music is published from a variety of 'worship' backgrounds. The music in this book is very up to date with probably more than half the hymns and songs having been written since the year 2000. Many of these new songs will probably make their way into Catholic Charismatic Renewal circles in the next few years.

Many of the songs would need to be led by an instrumental group; but there are some that are suitable for accompanying on the organ, or more easily on a piano. This book is worth a look if you want to try something a bit different and really up to date.

As well as new songs there are some helpful 'tips' pages including guitar strumming patterns, 'bridges' for changing key between songs, rehearsing, arranging songs, worship styles and sound systems.

Harmony of Heaven by Gordon Giles

We have moved on to Lent! We haven't seen a copy of this book ourselves, but this review came from www.chbookshop.co.uk (the web site of the official bookshop of the Church of England).

Musical meditations for Lent and Easter: a daily Bible reading and comment for every day from Ash Wednesday to Easter Monday together with reflection on a wealth of music that has some special relevance to the themes of the season.

The selection is broad, crossing the transient boundaries between spiritual, sacred and secular music: rediscover Creation through Saint-Saen's *Carnivale des Animaux*, re-imagine Isaiah's lupine vision with Prokofiev's ears, and return to your senses with Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*.

The drawback? You may be obliged to expand your musical collection in order to make full use of the forty entries. But with a cover price of £7.99 that is but a slight downside to a book so packed with inspiration it could truly last a lifetime. This is the ideal choice for classical buffs and anyone who just wants to wallow in magical music. Each entry concludes with a prayer and suggestions for further reading.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The results of the wedding and funeral survey are attached. A lot of people added explanatory comments to their answers, and these make interesting reading.

NEWS FROM THE PARISHES

We thought it would be a good idea to include in the newsletter a section sharing what is going on in our parishes. For this to be a success - we will need to hear from you - so please let us know your news.

In Saltcoats an Ecumenical Christmas Service is held in the Town Hall, and churches of different denominations are involved in this. Each church has its own 'spot' - maybe singing a carol, reciting a poem, putting on a short play with a Christmas theme etc, and there is congregational carol singing led by the Salvation Army. The idea came from the clergy in Saltcoats who wanted to give people who don't necessarily belong to a church the opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate Christmas. This annual event is proving to be very popular.

THE CORE GROUP . . . SUPPORTING AND PROMOTING MUSIC . . .

As ever, we welcome any suggestions for what the core group should be doing, and ways in which we can support and promote music. At times it can be hard for us to know whether we are meeting your needs and aspirations or not.

Volunteers to lead workshops are always welcome!

If you know of other people who would like a copy of this newsletter, please copy it for them - or direct them to the web site to read it (www.gallowaymusic.net). Please also show newsletters to your Parish Priest so that he is aware of our activities.

If you are receiving this newsletter, and you are no longer involved in music in your parish, please will you let Nicola know so that the mailing list can be updated.

With best wishes

The Music Core Group

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www.gallowaymusic.net

2004 is the 1400th anniversary of the death of St Gregory

*God our Father,
you taught St Gregory the Great
the value of music
in giving prayer, order, feeling and beauty.
Help us to be like him
in praising you
and in giving loving attention to each other.*

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