



# ALBAN NOTES

ST. ALBANS  
CATHEDRAL

St Albans Cathedral Ex-Choristers Association  
THE CATHEDRAL AND ABBEY CHURCH OF ST. ALBAN

Affiliated to the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers Associations

Issue 48 - Summer 2019

## Message from the Chairman

The Summer seems a distant memory with the rather sudden change in weather following further record-breaking temperatures.

As you will see below from Andrew Lucas, our Vice President, the Cathedral Choirs have been very busy, and no doubt earned their holidays.

I was delighted to see so many more members attend our AGM this year than is usual, naturally the focus of the day was not ECA business but to join together attending Choral Evensong and Thanksgiving for the Life of Peter Hurford. The service was a wonderful tribute to our President where the large congregation were treated to a feast of music performed beautifully by the Cathedral Choir. A transcript of the Address, given by Chris Hazell, Peter's producer at Decca, can be read in full - [here](#).



**The new Welcome Centre**  
which opened in June

Following the service, the Hurford family hosted afternoon tea in the Nave for all who could attend. This was a wonderful opportunity for members and friends to catch up with each other, many of whom hadn't been to St. Albans for several years. A special thank you to Ros Clements (nee Partridge) from Luccombe who attended, ensuring our close links with the village are never lost.

I was delighted to attend the Celebratory Evensong & Preview of the Alban, Britain's First Saint Project on 19th June in the Nave. The Abbey Girls Choir and men of the Cathedral Choir were conducted by Tom Winpenny, Assistant Master of the Music, the organist was Marko Sever, Organ Scholar. The canticles were Dyson in D and the anthem "Hail, Gladdening Light" by Charles Wood. Following the service, the congregation were invited to view new exhibitions within the Cathedral and also the newly modernised Chapter House and Welcome Centre. More can be read - [here](#).

Your committee will be meeting in the Autumn to plan events for the forthcoming year. I hope you will support these events, both choral and social and look forward to seeing you soon.

**Richard Lilley**  
Chairman



## Memorial Evensong for Peter Hurford

An account of the Memorial Evensong for Dr Peter Hurford held in the Cathedral on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

### "Use your ears, boys!"

Having taken our seats in the Quire and paged through the lavish service sheet for Peter Hurford's memorial service on 15th June, I became keenly aware that this event was conceived to celebrate the *musical* personality of a man who has enriched the musical life of the Abbey, as well as enriching the many of us who have benefitted from his tutelage and influence over the years.

His musical principles would be to the fore in the planning and performance of this wonderful service: precision, colour and contrast, silence, and recalling his often-repeated injunction to "use your ears, boys". Today, we were meant to use our ears, and not be distracted by visual temptations to scan the rows for old friends or maybe admire the colourful puppets lined up in the North Transept ready for the Albantide celebrations.

The organ music before the service was played by Thomas Trotter duly displaying contrasting moods and colours in Hurford's own Laudate Dominum suite and J S Bach's variations on the chorale "Sei gegrusset, Jesu Gutig". Tom Winpenny took over at the console to accompany the procession of choir and clergy with Hurford's poignant chorale prelude "Schmucke dich O meine Seele".

After a stirring singing of "Dear Lord and Father of mankind", the Dean welcomed the congregation with a moving tribute to Peter Hurford describing his enduring contribution to the musical life of the Cathedral and the city. He shared with us his perplexity when administering Holy Communion to Peter recently when in the grip of Alzheimer's disease, and reflecting that this became to him an act of communion with the man that Peter *was*, and extending to the many whom he had influenced and inspired.

Under Andrew Lucas's direction, the Rose responses and psalm 11 set to Hurford's chant were rendered at a deliberately moderate pace, enabling each syllable to be savoured. The purity and perfect intonation of Rev. Abigail's voice in the intoning of the responses was arresting.

Former Precentor, The Very Reverend Keith Jones read the first lesson (*Song of Solomon 2.10-14, 16-17*) as a passionate oration, conjuring up for us the magnificent imagery in this passage. The second lesson chosen from *Revelations 5. 6-14* was read by the Dean with its vivid imagery, including the passage "... they numbered ... thousands singing with full voice 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing..'".

The address was given by Mr Chris Hazell who for 20 years was Hurford's recording producer at Decca. Chris gave a fascinating and humorous insight into Hurford's more recent life as a recording artist, as it were from the other side of the microphone. Very particular instruments around the



globe were selected for recording the repertoire, and invariably requiring work at quite unsociable hours in order to minimise background noise and to negotiate access constraints.

We were entertained with amusing and surprising anecdotes about, amongst others: tee-shirts in Toronto, scaffolding and gargoyles in Toulouse, a saxophonist in Sydney! At a musical level, Chris described how Hurford would use these extended sessions to experiment with diverse stop combinations, exploring the full possibilities of tonal colours offered by these renowned instruments. The fruits of these sessions is of course available to us all from Hurford's recording catalogue.

The choir sang two anthems to frame the address. Maurice Greene's "Lord let me know mine end" was as I recall a favourite of Hurford's, remembering how frequently it was programmed in choir recitals in my time as chorister. Passages from the anthem have been my earworm companions while writing this account, and I have wondered how many choristers have grappled with the tricky chromatics of the solo middle section over the years. He would insist *"don't insult the composer by using the same dynamics when a phrase is repeated"*, and so the text "He heapeth, he heapeth up riches" would duly be sung a notch louder for the repetition of these words. John-Ellis Wallace and Jamie Mura both rendered this duet beautifully on this occasion, as did the rest of the choir for the tutti sections.

Hurford's well loved "Litany to the Holy Spirit" accompanied Chris back to his place, the first verse solo sung movingly by John-Ellis Wallace.

The service sheet advised us that Hurford started the tradition in the Abbey of raising the pitch by a semitone for each successive verse of the hymn "Mine eyes have seen the glory". Voices were indeed raised by the hundreds in the congregation as we lifted our eyes with a smile, and caught the eyes of former colleagues as we recognised Peter's humour in this gesture.

Thomas performed for us a colourful and weighty interpretation of Bach's C minor Passacaglia as the noble closing organ voluntary, for which the congregation was pleased to remain still, and with not a few humming along with the cantus firmus bass line.

The choice of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for this occasion was Herbert Howell's Gloucester service. Former choristers may remember this as having the two opening pages of intertwined melismatic treble melodies, a very tricky test of intonation. The closing passage of the Gloria for both movements is a sublime organ obligato circling away with a diminuendo to the very quietest sound on the organ. The congregation was enraptured as this softest of sounds gave way to a few eternal seconds of silence in this vast space.

**Simon T Trott**  
Honorary Secretary



## AGM news

At the ECA AGM in June, Simon Trott was confirmed as Honorary Secretary and a proposal was passed to amend the ECA constitution to establish a separate position of Vice Chair to be held by a member of the Girls Choir (and vice versa if the Chair is female).

## Choir News

From **Andrew Lucas**, *Master of the Music*

The Abbey Girls Choir sang Evensong in St Paul's Cathedral on bank holiday Monday 6th May, which has become an annual tradition. Meanwhile the Cathedral Choir boys and men gave a short lunchtime concert at home on the same day to promote and fundraise for their forthcoming tour to Italy later that month.

This year was the second time that the choir has given a concert tour to the Fano (Marché) area of Italy (the last time was in 2013) where they sang concerts and services in Fano and Pesaro Cathedrals and the Basilica of the Holy House in Loreto.

The Chorister Outreach Programme (COP) that we do in alliance with the Hertfordshire Music Service is now in its eleventh year, having worked with about 90 schools and some 9,000 school children from the south-west area of Hertfordshire, most of whom would not have had the experience of being taught singing by a trained specialist in music at their school without the support of this programme.



**Rehearsing in Pesaro Cathedral**

Many schools have continued to invest in choral singing, though there is still a lot of work to be done to make up for the gradual diminution in singing in primary schools. The choristers of both choirs always sing at the termly concerts in the cathedral.

Both the boys and girls, with the lay clerks, sang in this year's IOF Three Choirs concert (in effect six choirs!) along with the male and female voices from the Cathedral Choirs at Salisbury and the choirs of Jesus College, Cambridge (where we welcomed back one of our former organ scholars, Richard Pinel, in his new role as Director of Music). This concert partly celebrated the life and work of the late Dr Peter Hurford, founder of the IOF and former Master of the Music here, who was also a former organ scholar at Jesus College.

Assistant Master of the Music, Tom Winpenny, performed Francis Pott's enormous work *Christus - A Passion Symphony* in five movements in the Cathedral on Palm Sunday 14th April. The complete work lasted just over two hours and has only received fewer than ten performances



since its composition in the late 1980's due to its length and the technical demands it places on the performer. This marathon performance was a tour de force and one can only marvel at Tom's stamina and concentration with this great endeavour.

## Member News

On Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July, six members of the Abbey Girls' Choir were valedicted at the morning Choral Eucharist - **Xanthe Elliot, Rosanna Fenn, Bea Hardy, Jess Scorer, Alice Strike** and **Maria Yakovleva** - and three Cathedral Choristers were valedicted at Evensong - **Henry Mauldrige, Jamie Mura** and **Christian Seera**. We also welcome former tenor Lay Clerk **Peter Martin** as a member after he left the choir to pursue a career as a professional singer full time (see [www.petermartintenor.com](http://www.petermartintenor.com)).

We look forward to hearing from them in due course and wish them well for their future.

At the same service of Evensong, our new Precentor, **Revd Jonathan Lloyd** was installed.

## ECA Website - Facebook - Twitter

Our website ([StAlbansECA.org](http://StAlbansECA.org)) has been given a facelift which is now easier to navigate and search the membership database. Do let us know of any suggestions / edits you have to improve it further. Our [Facebook page](#) and Twitter account [@StAlbansECA](#) continue to be updated with relevant information so please feel free to follow, like, re-tweet and comment, or just keep up to date.

## Dates for the Diary

The ECA has been asked to sing for the following services:

<b>Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020</b>	<i>Corpus Christi</i> at 8pm.
<b>Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020</b>	<i>All Saints Day Choral Eucharist</i> 11:15am
<b>Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021</b>	<i>Ash Wednesday</i> at 8pm.

*Please make a note of these dates and look out for reminders and details of rehearsals in forthcoming editions of Alban Notes. Your support at such events is very much appreciated.*

