

BROMLEY PARISH CHURCH

REPORT OF THE CHOIR 2004

The Passiontide Concert last year proved to be Henry Fairs' last major occasion as our Director of Music. It was a fitting end to his period as director, comprising as it did two contrasting unaccompanied Masses (by Frank Martin and Ralph Vaughan Williams). Both of these works were challenging, particularly the Martin, but under Henry's guidance we rose to the challenge. Throughout his time with us, Henry demanded the highest standards and introduced much very fine music to the choir.

His final services were on Easter Day, when we said goodbye to him and to his fiancée Sonja.

Peter Spencer then took over the choir for the "interregnum". During that time, we sang the Vaughan Williams *Mass in G minor* liturgically at the dedication service for the new reredos, attended by Peter Lock. The choir again produced a fine performance.

Soon after, we had the interviews for the new Director of Music, attended by the choir children and all the adults. This gave all the choir members the opportunity to be an important part of the selection process. We had four impressive candidates, but by the end of the day we had offered the post to Tom Corns and were delighted when he accepted. Again, we have managed to find ourselves an outstanding Director of Music.

Peter Spencer (Assistant Organist)

Tom Corns' first service fell on the occasion of the Patronal Festival Eucharist and it was a few months later, at the beginning of the new academic year on the Harvest Festival weekend that the choir enjoyed participating in the events for Come, Taste, See. A thoroughly admirable performance by our young choristers was followed by Handel's rousing *Hallelujah!* from *Messiah* given by the full choir and an enlightening demonstration tour of the dazzling sounds of the Walker organ with the Director of Music at the keys. The choir memorably contributed to the Congregation Entertainment by singing several lighthearted pieces specially written by Malcolm Brown.

The recurring themes of October and November were the plainsong melodies of Duruflé's masterful *Requiem*. First the choir and many other audience members wondered to the strains of the BBC Singers in a recorded performance of the *Requiem* at Bromley Parish Church. Then the choir was joined by the massed voices of Eltham College Choir for a liturgical performance of the same work accompanied by Peter Spencer and directed by Tim Johnson and Tom Corns during the All Souls' Requiem.

The season of Advent began with inspiring singing at the Advent Carol Service and ended in glorious fashion with the traditional Service of Nine Lessons and Carols which ushered in a successful Christmas and left the choir relishing the challenges of a new year.

A priority continues to be the maintenance and strengthening of the chorister membership and in these times when the commitment required for singing properly can be perceived as unfashionable, we continue to work hard to advertise the many benefits (not least for children's health) and look forward with renewed vigour to school visits and other recruitment efforts next year.

In 2004 we were delighted to welcome Lucy Weston, Laura Walmsley and David Le Prevost as new members of the adult choir and it was with grateful thanks that we said farewell to Robert Grisbrook whose long service as a chorister now stands alongside distinguished solo roles in his final days as a treble, notably at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

Particular thanks to Janet Kendall-Bryant, Choir Librarian, and also to Peter Spencer for his skilful playing and unfailing reliability and support. Perhaps most of all, thank you to the choristers and their parents for all their hard work and valued commitment.

Thomas Corns (Director of Music)