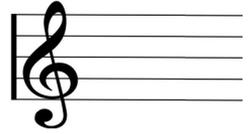


Report about Music for the Annual Parochial Meeting (2021)



Rarely has there been such a disturbance to the role of music within churches and their worshipping congregations as has been seen (and heard) during this pandemic.

Even the C16th yo-yo-ing between Catholic and Protestant denominations did not preclude everyone from hearing the music of master composers such as Tallis, Dowland and Gibbons. Only during the periods of “The Commonwealth” under Oliver Cromwell, viz. the abolition of Christmas, the removal of organs and stained-glass from churches, the burning of May-poles (singing & dancing) - and then the ‘reforms’ of the early Victorian period (*“To about 1860, the singing in most English churches and chapels was led, not by an organ, but by a small group of singers and a band of ad-hoc instrumentalists, usually situated in a gallery at the west end of the church. Thomas Hardy used the old spelling ‘Quire’ to describe this combination of band and singers”*) was there such curtailment of what was previously considered ‘normal’.

This last year our ‘normal’ has been almost a return to the ‘Quire’ which, because of Zoom’s latency delays, inherent in a system designed for speech, has returned us to hymns being led by a singer and an accompanist (and variations thereupon). Many thanks to those who gave of their talents and services to lead us through this period .. and to those who brought us recorded bells to introduce our worship.

There has also been music integrated into the on-line service which has been available each week via the church website <This Week> and featured a conventional hymn, a contemporary ‘Worship Song’, and concluded with a recording of music with an association to the theme of that Sunday.

From May onwards Music will resume its place in worship in the Holy Communion and Word services which will recommence in St. Leonard, and in the Wedding Ceremonies planned from the remainder of the year.

The Organ has remained remarkably playable through this period of dormancy but will obviously benefit from some professional attention - as it would have had as part of its routine tuning and maintenance programme (twice yearly). Like violins and flutes, organs are built from wood and ‘real’ materials and thrive on use: they deteriorate with neglect and are hideously expensive to try to return to a playable condition.

Likewise, the piano - small but powerful - requires tuning and the action attended to.

Slightly larger than the piano, the Organist too is looking forward to resuming his place on the organ bench and ‘knocking-out’ the odd tune or two. Since there has been so little opportunity to be ‘the organist’ I decided to put myself onto half-pay initially (not a contractual obligation) and then not to impose my salary on the church finances.

In the initial period the Choir will be allowed to sing to (at) their congregation - even if the congregation are not allowed the same privilege of singing within the same building (Does that make sense ?).

Perhaps everyone should join ‘the choir’ ?

Harry Grove

Clent Community Choir was really gathering pace just before the lockdown. This was a choir made up of people from many different walks of life. Many had never sung in public before, some felt lonely and isolated, others just wanted to sing. Unfortunately, nearly a year ago we lost one of our dear friends, Tracey. The choir meant the world to her and she attended with great enthusiasm.

We hope to dedicate the last song we were learning together, to her memory.

Kim Topham