



Thomas Tallis Society Choir

Musical Director: Eamonn Dougan

NEWSLETTER Winter/Spring 2025

Dear Friends and Patrons,

Welcome to our newsletter, with a review of our September 2023 to June 2024 activity and a look forward to future concerts.

This year 2023-24, TTS's 58th year, we have performed a record six concerts over the year.

This has also been the eighth year of the Choral Ambassador scheme which we launched in 2015. Although we only had one Choral Ambassador, we welcomed back previous Choral Ambassadors in December.

Concerts

In September 2023, we held a concert of **English Song for Choir and Piano**, directed by Mark Wilde, who had previously conducted Pledges of Heaven's Joy back in October 2019, with David Owen-Norris at the piano. We performed Elgar's *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands*, Vaughan Williams *Three Shakespeare Songs* (celebrating 150 years since his birth) and Jonathan Dove's *The Passing of the Year*.



The concert took place not long after the death of the Queen. We hope that the programme was a fitting tribute; three great British composers that she had met and for whom they had composed or dedicated music; setting great English poetry from Shakespeare to Tennyson.

Advance sales for the concert were slow but a large and appreciative audience showed up on the night!

In November we finally got to perform Hugh Keyte's edition of *Spem in Alium* (a piece we'd worked on during the pandemic) together with another 40-part motet by David Bednall, *Lux orta est iusto*. The remainder of the programme comprised other polychoral motets by Philips, Gibbons, and Byrd as we celebrated the 400th anniversary of his death. We were accompanied by the English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble. We performed the concert from the church's galleries which certainly achieved the effect we intended. As soon as the publicity went out, tickets went quickly and we were totally sold out before the performance. We sold tickets in the choir stalls and seats in chairs in front of the pews. Without using the gallery as seating (usually available for concerts) we can just fit 300 seats downstairs and we sold them all!





In December we performed our biennial performance of Messiah. The only available date in December was Friday 1 which meant only top and tailing choral movements before the concert which was unusual but seemed to work out.

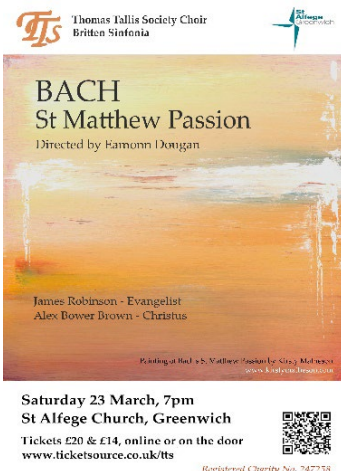
One of the joys of this performance was to have past TTS Choral Ambassadors as soloists; we had Emily Jennings, our longest serving Choral Ambassador, Sam Jenkins and Ben Davies, who all gave stellar performances. Sadly, Angharad Rowlands was unwell and couldn't take part.

Messiah is *always* popular, it didn't seem to matter that it was a Friday night; we pretty much sold out, including the gallery.

In January came Liederabend, an evening of song and the German term for a song recital. This gave the singers the opportunity to start work on their German before performing the Matthew Passion, and also to perform music possibly unknown to most of the choir – the repertoire by Franz Schubert and Robert and Clara Schumann.

Emma, Becky and Larry all sang solo pieces accompanied by Jack Redman in his first of two concerts with the choir this year; great performances all. Thanks also to Daniel for another set of excellent programmes notes for this concert. There are often comments from audience members about the standard of the programmes and the quality of the notes is due largely to him.

We didn't sell many tickets in advance but sold well on the door and the audience was complimentary about the choir even if the memory that will probably endure is the piano playing of Khrystyna Mykhailichenko!



March heralded TTS's first performance of the *St Matthew Passion* under Eamonn, a piece he has waited to do when he felt the choir was ready. We had a dedicated workshop day and extra rehearsals for the 56 singers in the choir for this event.

Britten Sinfonia played and we had James Robinson as Evangelist and Alex Bower Brown back as Christus. Emma and Becky shared the soprano solos, and Angharad Rowlands who missed Messiah was the alto soloist. Seven members of the choir had step out solos.

Although not completely sold out, the concert was very well-attended and the audience was extremely complimentary about all aspects of the performance: choir, orchestra, soloists, German and the overall effect in telling of the story.

We were planning to finish the year with Handel's *Semele*. However following a review of the accounts and the consideration that there is not a huge amount for the choir in the piece, we decided to postpone *Semele* and go ahead with a programme of Constant Lambert's *Rio Grande* in a version for two pianos and percussion, together with the English premiere of Phillip Cooke's *Gloria*, also scored for two pianos and percussion, and a celebration of Stanford in the 100th year after his death.

Naomi Quant sang the solo in *The Rio Grande* alongside Alex Bower Brown who she also partnered with last year for the Brahms *Requiem*.

It was a fun programme and good to finish the year with some of the syncopated rhythms that started the year. Sadly we didn't attract a large audience.



Friends and Patrons party



In April 2024 we held our Friends and Patrons party in the Church Hall. We were delighted to see so many of our Friends and Patrons attending.

This year's party is on April 6 and we will be offering the same mix of good food (thank you Alice), wine, and a musical interlude. It's a great opportunity to chat to other Friends and Patrons, to talk to singers and to bend Eamonn's ear!

We hope you have enjoyed reading this newsletter and we look forward to seeing you at future concerts.

Finally – thank you! We wouldn't have developed and grown without the continued support of our Friends and Patrons.

Carole

Carole Moses

Friends and Patrons Secretary