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TIMOTHY CHARLES STOREY

THE MUSIC OF ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL 1872-1972:  
THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE MODERN CATHEDRAL CHOIR

UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM  
MMus 1998

The state of the cathedral's music in 1872 is first described, at the time of Stainer's appointment as organist: an extensive account is given of the means by which the choir was re-organised, disciplined and enlarged, with an examination of how the repertory was affected by these changes and by developments in the Liturgy. There follows a description of the consolidation of these reforms, with detailed consideration of the musical and religious principles upon which this modern cathedral choir had been founded, and of public reaction to the 'eclectic' method of choosing its music.

Developments and continued progress later in the nineteenth century are related, and the onset of a decline in the Edwardian period. The effects both musical and financial of the First World War and its aftermath are considered, as are the severe interruption to the Cathedral's services by the closure of the dome area for structural repairs, the re-introduction of full choral services after its re-opening of the cathedral in 1930, and the difficulty of maintaining standards thereafter. The break with tradition in appointing a new Organist from outside is explained, with a comparison of his reform of the repertory at Durham and St Paul's.

The Second World War seemed to represent a most serious threat to the survival of cathedral choirs: credit is given to the Dean and Chapter for their example in maintaining the choir school in exile at Truro while the men continued to sing at St Paul's. A sympathetic appraisal is given of the choir in the post-war years, though the need of reform is admitted, and the thesis is concluded with an evaluation of a new Dean and Organist's prescription for the modernisation of the cathedral's music and worship, and the creation for the 1970s of a modern cathedral choir.

# University of Durham

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# THE MUSIC OF ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL 1872-1972

THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE  
MODERN CATHEDRAL CHOIR

IN TWO VOLUMES

## VOLUME ONE

TIMOTHY CHARLES STOREY

University of Durham  
Department of Music

Master of Music  
1998

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The modern cathedral choir, together with its counterpart in collegiate chapels and royal peculiars, is a Victorian re-creation of an ancient institution which had become corrupted by parsimony, inefficiency and neglect. Its essential components are a treble line of children properly educated in a boarding or day school, or with other special provision for their education; adult male singers of a professional standard; skilled professional direction; a full, comprehensive and varied repertory in which music of all periods, not least the contemporary, is given proper representation; and a standard of performance which does not give offence to the sensitive listener and at best can stand comparison with the finest secular music-making. Such things are taken for granted, and rightly so: but to the late nineteenth-century Chapter of St Paul's and its servants belongs much of the credit for their establishment.

In 1872 the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's were approaching the end of a radical re-ordering of the cathedral's interior furnishings, including the organ which was rebuilt and placed in a new position, with the aim of creating a modern cathedral in which the High Altar should be visible from the body of the church, and the whole space of the building thrown open for use. Their reform of the service and music, on the other hand, was not in its intention radical at all: in the true spirit of the 'Tractarians' they wished to restore what had been lost since the Reformation (the frequent celebration of the Holy Communion, sung by the choir on Sundays and holy-days) and to make what had survived (daily choral worship by a choir of boy choristers and professional adult male singers) function properly. What they created became a model copied by other cathedrals: it is sad but hardly surprising that everywhere it proved a model impossible to sustain, though St Paul's held out longer than most against the forces of education, inflation and leisure; and I have attempted to give some account of the ensuing history of decline and the reasons for it.

A century later fundamental questions were again asked about both choir and organ; and both were modified, but not changed out of all recognition, to make them suitable for what was now required. This seemed a convenient place for this survey to end, for 1972 was the year by which the cathedral choir's activities had in most respects assumed their modern pattern, which in all essentials is still followed a quarter-of-a-century later, and in which I am privileged to participate from time to time as a deputy Vicar-Choral.

It soon became apparent to me that little detailed research has been done on this period in the cathedral's music, and that the handful of published works which have to do with the subject are misleading and inaccurate in detail, with honourable exceptions. Prestige's *St Paul's in its Glory 1831-1911* is an indispensable account of the prelude to the reforms and their execution, though not primarily concerned with the music; and Gatens (*Victorian Cathedral Music in Theory and Practice*) offers useful insights. The disappointing biography of Stainer by Peter Charlton is especially unreliable in dealing with his time at St Paul's: Philip Barrett's *Barchester* only touches on the subject; and the treatment of the twentieth century in Scott's booklet on the music of St Paul's is sketchy in the extreme. I venture to hope therefore that this account will have established once and for all what actually happened at certain important times, especially in the 1870s when with luck, persistence and a certain amount of low cunning Chapter created order out of the chaos into which the cathedral's music had descended.

This is primarily a history of the choir, its organisation and the music which it sang; but not of the choir-school nor of the organ, though reference is made from time to time

to both. Nor is much mention made of the Sunday evening service and its separate choir of men: there is great need of further research into the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy and the anthems and services with orchestra specially composed for it, some account of which is given in a Supplement. The separate volume of appendices, compiled from service lists and from the printed reports which Succentors formerly submitted, provides documentary evidence of what was sung by the Cathedral Choir at the statutory services during certain of these years.

I am most grateful to the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's for permission to undertake this research, and for allowing me ready access to the two parallel sets of Minutes (Chapter and Weekly Chapter) which contain most of the primary material here drawn upon. Mr Joseph Wisdom, the Librarian and Keeper of the Muniments at St Paul's, has welcomed me to Wren's magnificent library and been a most helpful and friendly host, as have Mr Robin Langley (Royal College of Organists), Mr Roger Norris (Durham Cathedral), and the staff of Durham University Library and of the Guildhall Library of the City of London, which contains some of the archives of St Paul's and several rare published works.

My thanks are also owed to Mr John Scott, Organist of St Paul's Cathedral; to Mr Richard Turbet, Music Librarian in the University Aberdeen, for much helpful advice; to the Revd John Lees and the Revd John Paul of the College of Minor Canons for allowing me to consult service lists in their keeping, and to Mr Maurice Bevan for his recollections of his early years in the choir. I am fortunate in numbering among my friends two former Choristers of St Paul's, John Butterfield and Derek Perry, on whose reminiscences I have drawn freely: Dr Brian Crosby and the late Canon Gordon Berriman have been a similar source of useful comparisons with Durham in the 1930s. I owe a considerable debt of gratitude to the Graduate School and the Department of Music at Durham for allowing me to return to my old University, and in particular to Dr Jeremy Dibble who has been a most genial, patient and encouraging Supervisor: above all I am glad to record the loving and patient support of my wife Cynthia, in whom I am truly blessed.

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I declare that none of the material herein contained has previously been submitted for a degree in the University of Durham or any other institution.

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## DR STAINER'S FIRST TWO YEARS (1872-4)

The standard of the music had fallen to a very low point. The organ was in disrepair, and very little of it available for use. His own appointment had been ungraciously received except by the Dean and canons, who supported him with complete confidence. *They accepted his proposal that they should say nothing critical to him for two years; and he gave his guarantee that after that period they would find entire satisfaction.* This pact was fully borne out, for after two years the fame of the St Paul's choir was world-wide. But meanwhile Stainer suffered all kinds of trying experiences and insults. The special choir had resigned in a body, and on the following Sunday sat in a row in the front of the Dome, expecting a breakdown. He was saved by some loyal friends. Shortly after this a man rushed into the organ loft exclaiming, "Of course we know why you are appointed; it is not because you can play the organ; any one can see that you can't" (only a tiny portion was in fact available), "It is obviously because you are a High Churchman." Stainer suffered many experiences like this. He succeeded nobly, but it nearly wore him out. After eighteen months in office he had a bad nervous breakdown. In the Isle of Wight, where he went for a rest, someone saw him looking desperately ill and thought he would not get over this breakdown. Mercifully he recovered, and carried the choir and his own organ-playing to the highest degree of excellence. His establishment of the annual performances of the *St. Matthew Passion* was a notable achievement in those days (Edmund H. Fellowes)<sup>1</sup>

This lengthy extract may fairly be described as the traditional, almost official appraisal of Stainer's work at St Paul's, and it has been accepted without question by subsequent writers.<sup>2</sup> It is a noble and romantic picture, but one which credits that undeniably great man with more than he deserves, especially in its assertion that all was beyond criticism or improvement after only two years: Fellowes was at pains to rescue Stainer's reputation from the uncritical condemnation common at that time and largely founded on currently fashionable distaste for his published compositions, especially *The Crucifixion*. The substance of the paragraph quoted above was a conversation with Stainer, already in Fellowes' own words 'an old man, worn out with hard work,' related by an octogenarian who had been described several years earlier as 'woolly and old and living in the past.'<sup>3</sup> It is no discredit to either man to suggest that inevitably the sum of

<sup>1</sup> 'Sir John Stainer', *English Church Music*, January 1951, 7

<sup>2</sup> e.g. Philip Barrett, *Barchester* (London: SPCK, 1993), 179, 212; Peter Charlton, *John Stainer* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1984), 56-7; George L. Prestige, *St Paul's in its Glory* (London: SPCK, 1955), 151-2

<sup>3</sup> Letter from the Dean of Chichester, 19 October 1943, with Church Music Society papers in RCO library



their memories is less than totally reliable,<sup>4</sup> and detailed consideration of Fellowes' assertions seems an appropriate and helpful prelude to this study.

**'The standard of music had fallen to a very low point.'** Ample evidence exists to confirm this, and the more colourful incidents of John Goss's declining years have been frequently recounted; the organist playing one chant while the choir sang another, the anthem having to be changed because of a lack of the necessary singers, and (the most notorious of all) a performance of the *Hallelujah Chorus* with only two of the men present.<sup>5</sup> Some attempts had been made to improve matters at various times: as long ago as 1852 six supernumeraries had been appointed to assist the six regular men (the Vicars-Choral) on Sundays; and in 1870, their number having dwindled to four, a fifth was added, their salaries were increased and they were required to sing both at Sunday and certain weekday services. They were subject to detailed regulations, but attempts to extend similar discipline to the Vicars-Choral, freeholders constituting an independent corporation with independent revenues, were less successful. By long tradition the Organist had been a Vicar-Choral as a means of securing his salary and security of tenure, his place in the choir being taken by a deputy paid by Chapter, and Stainer insisted on the continuance of this custom.<sup>6</sup>

An article in the *Musical Standard* of 14 January 1871 seems to have escaped the attention of previous writers, but is worthy of extensive quotation to illustrate the conditions prevailing just before Stainer's appointment. Under the title 'An Analysis of the Choir and the Music performed by them at the Afternoon Service of Sunday, Jan. 8, 1871' the anonymous writer says this:

The choir consisted of ten men's voices and thirteen boys' and babies' voices. Of the five men sitting on the north side, No.1 was a bass voice, rather thin, but good; 2, bass, very good; 3, tenor, may have been good, but worth nothing now, except in a chorus; 4, tenor, very good; 5, alto, weak, but fair tone. Boys and babies, north side; with the exception of No.1 and the soloist in the anthem, not worth a nap. South side, five men; No.1, bass, passable; 2, tenor, good; 3, supposed to be a tenor, but might be anything you liked except a chorister, but if he is one more shame to those in authority; 4, young alto voice of good quality; 5, alto, has been very good, but fading now. Boys and babies, south side; except No.2 and one of the babies – as before; in fact the trebles, with the exceptions mentioned would hardly be considered good enough for the meanest church in London, or indeed anywhere else; and truly the man who is supposed to form a choir out of such material is to be pitied....The climax was the anthem, "Arise,

<sup>4</sup> William J. Gatens, *Victorian Cathedral Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 182

<sup>5</sup> e.g. Prestige *op. cit.* 148-9; David Scott, *The Music of St Paul's Cathedral* (London: Stainer & Bell, 1972), 25-6

<sup>6</sup> Prestige *op. cit.* 68, 98, 151-3

shine," a wretched, long, tedious affair of Greene's:...of its general performance there is but one word suitable, and that is "disgraceful!" Possibly those engaged in the verse parts did their best, but that "best" was by no means of a high order; and as to the chorus parts, although there were thirteen trebles, at no time did there appear to be more than an irregular confused hum of children's voices, trying to sing something of which the majority seemed incapable; indeed, towards the end of the final chorus the boys, etc., stopped singing altogether, and stood staring at each other till it was finished.<sup>7</sup>

The modern reader's reaction is to blame the cathedral's Organist, but it must be borne in mind that his responsibilities at this time, and at least in theory for many more years to come, were confined solely to playing the organ. The boys' training was in the hands of a Vicar-Choral, Frederick Walker, and the music was chosen by the Succentor, the Revd W. C. Fynes Webber, who had been a Minor Canon since 1850 and Succentor since 1856. It was a common complaint, voiced eloquently by S. S. Wesley and Stanford, that a well-qualified organist was obliged to be subordinate to a clergyman who might at best be no more than an amateur musician: the working musicians of a cathedral had to produce performances of whatever that clergyman chose to select.<sup>8</sup>

The article in the *Musical Standard* gave rise to a lively correspondence. 'A Barrister,' after confirming the earlier writer's opinion of the choir, went on to complain of the limited repertory of music:

The same services and anthems are continually repeated. The annual stock (for Sundays) consists of about eight services and twenty-two anthems....A very undue importance is attached to Greene's anthems (and those too not the best) to the exclusion of the works of Purcell, Blow, Jer. Clark, Croft, and Boyce....I fear one main cause of the small stock of services and anthems is the laziness of the master of the boys. It is far easier for him to take them frequently over a small list, which they must know almost by heart, than to go to the trouble of teaching them new things.<sup>9</sup>

He complained also of the lack of any published music list, and mentioned the unfortunate effect of the organ's removal in 1859 from its screen to a position buried under the arches of the chancel.

A fortnight later 'One who Knows' laid the blame squarely on the Succentor:

With regard to non-performance, it should be known that the selection of services and anthems for each week rests with a dignitary known as the succentor....The musical taste of the said succentor is most questionable, and every week's list contains good proof of this fact. His selections would doubtless have

<sup>7</sup> *The Musical Standard* 14 January 1871, 16-17

<sup>8</sup> Charles Villiers Stanford, 'Music in Cathedral and Church Choirs,' *Studies and Memories* (London: Archibald Constable, 1908), 65-6

<sup>9</sup> *The Musical Standard* 11 February 1871, 75

been considered grand a hundred years ago, but in the present day the services of Tallis, Farrant, Child, Gibbons, Brian [Bryne], Patrick, &c. can never be really acceptable to the ear....

Now, this succentor appears to delight in putting a preponderance of this old music before the public – and the evil is, that he does it to the utter exclusion of Handel's works, with the single exception of the Messiah; there is a little more Mendelssohn done, but then it is the same things over and over again, and invariably the shortest and easiest:...Cathedral composers are more fortunate than the great masters, Greene especially. I have frequently heard two and even three of his anthems in one week.

"A Barrister" fears that the frequent repetition of music is owing to the laziness of the master of the boys. Now, as the master of the boys has nothing to do with the selection of music, his duty being to teach or practise them in whatever is appointed to be sung by the succentor; and further to this, the said master is a most painstaking and excellent musician, I think your correspondent must forgive me for endeavouring to remove an idea which might be very injurious to the character of the party concerned....I do not know when the Cathedral had been so badly off for trebles; there are certainly fourteen or fifteen of them, but out of the first six there is only one whose voice is worth anything [and] all the rest are so small – babies, as some one termed them.<sup>10</sup>

A glance at the Sunday music for 1871 listed in Appendix 1 will confirm or deny these accusations: Chapter had in fact already made similar criticisms of its own, ordering the Succentor 'to have the anthem list framed and put up in the cathedral each week and to set anthems which might be so far as possible in harmony with the teachings of the Church.'<sup>11</sup> It is important to remember that these were the conditions inherited by Stainer, and that no alteration in any of them was made until nearly the end of the first of those two years after which, according to Fellowes, 'the fame of the St. Paul's Choir was world-wide.'

Criticisms such as these may have been a factor in Goss's decision to submit his resignation towards the end of 1871: in another part of his letter 'A Barrister' compared his playing unfavourably with that of his assistant, George Cooper; and in the Weekly Chapter 'letters from Mr Webber [Succentor] and Mr Francis [senior Vicar-Choral] were read and it was agreed to refer them to the full Chapter.'<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately the letters have not survived, so one may only guess at their contents, and in any case 'the blame could not all be laid on the unhappy Goss. The root of the trouble lay in the slackness of the administration and the traditional jealousies between different interests within the establishment. But it was also true that Goss took many outside engagements and had never been expected to give his whole time to St Paul's. Chapter therefore let it be known to him that for the future the large increase which was contemplated in the

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* 25 February 1871, 87-88

<sup>11</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 7 January 1871

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* 28 October 1871

musical activities of the Cathedral made it desirable for its organist to render full-time service.'<sup>13</sup>

Goss took the hint and resigned: being a Vicar-Choral he had a freehold and could not easily be dismissed. A leading article in *The Choir* deftly observed that 'while all will regret to see him leave his post, no one, we think, will doubt the wisdom of the course he has adopted;'<sup>14</sup> or, in other words, 'We don't want to lose you, but we think you should go.' Another journal, never as favourably disposed towards St Paul's, preferred to eulogise Goss's 'tasteful playing and skilful accompaniment of the old cathedral anthem.'<sup>15</sup>

**'The organ was in disrepair and very little of it available for use.'** This is simply untrue, as is the oft-repeated claim that Stainer rebuilt the organ,<sup>16</sup> and it is time to put the record straight. The history of the organ is inextricably bound up with the Dean and Chapter's contentious decision in 1859 to take down the organ screen and open up the whole length of the cathedral, much the same thing being done in Durham Cathedral and many others.<sup>17</sup> As at Durham, the old organ was re-erected further up the chancel, buried under an arch, and the ultimate solution to the resulting problems was the same, an almost completely new organ by 'Father' Willis, divided on both sides of the chancel as near the nave as possible. Willis had charge of the organ in St Paul's from 1863: meanwhile, as mentioned above, an organ had been purchased and erected on a gallery in the south transept for use at the special evening services under the dome.

When it was decided to decorate and improve the dome area, it was agreed that the most urgent task was to reconstruct the cathedral organ and place it somewhere more suitable. The committee to which this task was entrusted included Willis, Goss, Cooper and the organist of the Temple Church (E. J. Hopkins): Stainer was later added to it, but this was his only contribution to the task of rebuilding. He most certainly did not 'rebuild the organ,' and the scheme as finally carried out was largely inspired by Willis, who was able to assure the committee that the proposed division of the instrument was

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<sup>13</sup> Prestige *op. cit.* 149

<sup>14</sup> *The Choir* 30 December 1871, 415

<sup>15</sup> *The Musical Standard* 6 January 1872, 1

<sup>16</sup> e.g. Barrett *op. cit.* 179

<sup>17</sup> e.g. Hereford, Lichfield, Peterborough, Salisbury and Worcester

technically feasible: it was well under way when Stainer took up his duties on Lady Day, 25 March 1872. The resulting layout is in all essentials that of the cathedral today, with the Wren case cut in two and placed against the piers of the dome at the entrance to the chancel, with stalls for singers and clergy between. This decision, controversial at the time and called into renewed question a century later when the organ was restored, had far-reaching effects on the choral music of the cathedral: no longer would it suffice for a small choir to sing in a small enclosed space, surrounded by the congregation, in an intimate acoustic and supported by the gentle sounds of an old-fashioned organ, but it would have to reach out to a congregation seated under the vast echoing spaces of the dome. This has determined the composition of the choir and its style of singing ever since.

Any 'reconstruction' by Willis tended to result in a virtually-new organ in his unmistakable style, and St Paul's was no exception. Some thought the result thin and unsympathetic: one worshipper stayed away for ten years in protest, but on his return opined that the organ sounded better and must have been revoiced.<sup>18</sup> It was a major undertaking, and as late as March 1873 the 32' and 8' reeds on the pedal remained to be inserted, as did the composition mechanism.<sup>19</sup> An unlooked-for complication was the decision to hold a Thanksgiving Service on 27 February 1872 for the recovery of the Prince of Wales from typhoid. The organ cases were in their new position and the manuals were playable; but the pedal action was incomplete, with the astonishing but apparently successful consequence that while Cooper (the sub-organist) played the manual parts Willis, an organist of no mean ability, played the pedals from a temporary pedal-board. Goss wrote a *Te Deum* and an anthem and was knighted: the massed choirs of Westminster Abbey, Windsor, the Chapels Royal and many other establishments were conducted by Mr Winn, a Vicar-Choral who had for some years directed the music at the Sunday evening services.<sup>20</sup> Goss did not conduct, as is sometimes claimed,<sup>21</sup> but played the organ before and after the service. The music

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<sup>18</sup> *Ecclesiastical Gazette* 16 October 1882; letter from 'Precentor'

<sup>19</sup> *The Musical Standard* 8 March 1873, 147

<sup>20</sup> *The Choir*, 24 February 1872, 114; 2 March 1872, 130

<sup>21</sup> Scott *op. cit.* 27

received mixed reviews, but an amusing squabble occurred, instigated by Gauntlett<sup>22</sup> and well reported in *The Choir*, over the inclusion of S. S. Wesley's tune 'Aurelia' (commonly sung to 'The Church's one foundation') which, he complained, 'is made up from the well known air "Auld Robin Gray" and in hearing it it is impossible not to be reminded of "My father broke his arm" and "My mither, she fell sick," and of the cow that was "stole away."'<sup>23</sup>

Thus the organ was unfinished at this stage, and apart from the proper connection of the pedal mechanism and the insertion of two of the pedal stops Willis then proceeded very slowly, after the fashion of most builders whether of houses or of organs. There was a problem with fitting in all the intended stops for the pedal organ, despite the digging of a pit into the crypt to accommodate the 32' pipes, and one stop (the Bourdon) had to be left out. Chapter agreed to spend £150 on (unidentified) extra stops,<sup>24</sup> but not until July of the next year (1873) was the organ finished, and in March 1875 there had to be a week of unaccompanied services during repairs to the bellows.<sup>25</sup> A specification published in *The Musical Standard* drew the seemingly inevitable letter complaining that only two stops remained from the old organ, followed in its turn by a reply from Stainer disclaiming all responsibility for the rebuild, aptly summarised as "Please, Sir, it wasn't me" in a rejoinder by "Conservative", the writer of the original letter.<sup>26</sup> Stainer indeed had his troubles with the organ, but not at all of the kind described by Fellowes.

**'His appointment had been ungraciously received....Meanwhile Stainer suffered all kinds of trying experiences:...a man rushed into the organ loft exclaiming, "Of course we all know why you are appointed;...It is obviously because you are a High Churchman."'** There was considerable public interest in Stainer's appointment, as in St Paul's generally: the appointment of Robert Gregory to a Canonry in December 1868, and the subsequent arrival of Canon Liddon (April 1870)

<sup>22</sup> Henry John Gauntlett 1805-1876; organ designer and composer of hymn-tunes inc. *Irby*, sung to 'Once in Royal David's city'

<sup>23</sup> *The Choir* 24 February 1872, 110

<sup>24</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 6 July 1872

<sup>25</sup> *The Musical Standard* 13 March 1875, 174

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* 12 July, 26 July, 2 & 9 August 1873; 29, 59, 75, 92-3

and Dean Church (August 1871) had provided St Paul's with the nucleus of a Chapter determined to improve the cathedral's services. As a former chorister of St Paul's Stainer had first-hand experience of its problems: he had then come under the influence of Ouseley at Tenbury before being appointed Organist of Magdalen College, Oxford in 1860 at the age of twenty; and his work there had won general acclaim.<sup>27</sup> Writing some forty years later Canon Scott Holland was in no doubt of the new organist's complete sympathy with the Tractarian vision of the Chapter in general and Liddon in particular: 'It was Liddon who brought up Stainer from Oxford, to whom St Paul's owes the entire setting of its worship in the spiritual key and temper which is its great inheritance today.'<sup>28</sup>

There were many who felt confident in accusing the newly-appointed Dean and Chapter of ritualist tendencies or at least sympathies: to such as these every action of the Dean and Chapter was automatically suspect, as was everyone appointed to office by them, and *The Musical Standard* in particular gave ample space to such views and maintained a generally hostile interest in the Cathedral. There was a corresponding tendency to praise the supposed Golden Age of Goss and his predecessors: clearly memories were short. The death in 1876 of Cooper, who had been Goss's assistant for many years and whose failure to succeed him was to some a continuing scandal, occasioned a series of letters hostile to Stainer,<sup>29</sup> most of them from a gentleman signing himself 'Old School' and complaining *inter alia* that 'our young organists are too fond of following the doubtful example set by Dr Stainer, whose accompaniments are, as a rule, too quiet.' Attempting to damn him with faint praise, he described Stainer as a capable organist but not a church musician, and reproduced the allegations of Tractarian bias in his appointment. In contrast he praised Goss's colourful playing of Psalm 89: Goss had been renowned for his illustration of any of the Psalmist's references to stormy weather, and the redoubtable Miss Maria Hackett's visible delight in this elicited one of Sydney Smith's most famous witticisms, which no writer about St Paul's can hope to avoid: 'Mr Goss, I do not know whether you have ever observed the

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<sup>27</sup> Charlton *op. cit.* 22ff

<sup>28</sup> Holland, Henry Scott, *A Bundle of Memories* (London: Wells Gardner, Darton & Co., 1915), 83

<sup>29</sup> *The Musical Standard* 30 September, 28 October, 18 & 25 November, 23 December 1876; 220, 284, 333, 347, 411-2

phenomenon; but your organ never thunders but what Miss Hackett's countenance lightens.'<sup>30</sup>

All of this is, strictly speaking, outside the 'two years' under discussion, but it serves to illustrate the persistent undercurrent of criticism to which Stainer was subject. There is, however, no evidence of hostility within the Cathedral. As his teacher during Stainer's days as a Chorister at St Paul's, George Cooper the now venerable Assistant Organist had prophesied a great future for him (and for his fellow-pupil Arthur Sullivan), and he would have derived much satisfaction from that prophecy's fulfilment. Of the Vicars-Choral Thomas Francis seemed to take great pride in his obstinacy; but his well-publicised quarrels over attendance were with the Succentor and Chapter and not strictly Stainer's concern, and of the other four Vicars-Choral two were failing, one (Charles Lockey) was represented by a 'permanent deputy,' and the fourth, William Winn, continued to conduct on certain occasions during 1872 and was Stainer's principal solo bass. The five Assistant Vicars-Choral included men of quality, such as Walker, the boys' singing-master, who for a while took full rehearsals in Stainer's absence; William Barrett, an Oxford BMus, author and composer who collaborated with Stainer in the production of a musical dictionary; and Robert de Lacy, composer and water-colour artist. The published reminiscences of William Frost, a deputy in 1872 and future Vicar-Choral, speak of Stainer's charm and winning ways with the choir.

The Succentor's inefficiencies are easy to chronicle, though whether or not they resulted in friction at a personal level can only be surmised. His principal duty was to select the music to be sung, and Chapter's recurrent complaint that this was all too frequently done at the last minute led it to resolve that he should submit a list of the next week's music each Saturday and post it up in the Cathedral.<sup>31</sup> He also sent details of the Sunday music to *The Choir* and *The Musical Standard*, but not until 1873 was a weekly list printed, at Stainer's suggestion.<sup>32</sup> Succentor Webber's lists are a shoddy production, characterised by misprints, the frequent omission of composers' names, confusion over

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<sup>30</sup> John S. Bumpus, *The Organists and Composers of St Paul's Cathedral* (London: Bowen, Hudson & Co., 1891), 102 ff. Maria Hackett, 'The Choristers' Friend,' represented their interests against the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's until her death in 1874: she widened her crusade to include almost every other choral foundation.

<sup>31</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 31 December 1870, 7 January 1871

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.* 21 December 1872



whether morning services include *Benedictus* or *Jubilate*, and excessive repetition of a few pieces of music alongside random single appearances of others. The list for the week ending 9 May 1873 had to be re-issued because the first attempt omitted to recognise Ascension Day.

**'The Special Choir had resigned in a body.'** By now the reader should not be surprised to learn that no evidence for this exists outside Fellowes' article: Frost does not mention it, and *The Musical Standard*, usually so avid of any scandal at St Paul's, is silent on the subject. The only entry in Chapter Minutes is dated 18 April 1872: it recorded the usual thanks to the choir, approved the customary cheque for its entertainment to dinner, and informed members that they would have to apply to Dr Stainer for admission. The choir was then disbanded, as was normal, for since its formation in 1861 the Sunday evening services at which it sang had only been held between January and Easter: it is this that may have given rise to the legend that it 'resigned in a body' upon Stainer's arrival.

This large voluntary body, up to 200-strong and including both men and women, sat in the south transept on a semicircular platform beneath the organ bought in 1861: a Vicar-Choral (latterly Winn) conducted the proceedings from an elevated "box" placed between transept and dome. The congregation under the dome faced not eastwards into the chancel but southwards into the transept, 'with an effect more of a concert-room than of a place of worship.'<sup>33</sup> All this was to change from January 1873. The choir-stalls in the reconstructed chancel were used, enforcing a reduction in the number of singers: the choir was surpliced and henceforth included only the cathedral choristers and those men who were re-admitted; and it sang throughout the year. Anthems were no longer sung, as the emphasis was now on congregational singing, and the conduct of the service was designed to provide for parish churches a model of the kind favoured by the Tractarians. *The Musical Standard* was not impressed with the exclusion of ladies from the choir and the abandonment of the singing of anthems, though making no mention of any dispute or protest;<sup>34</sup> and *The Choir* merely recorded that

The first definite step in the reform of the choral arrangements at St Paul's Cathedral was taken on Sunday evening last, when the choristers, nearly seventy strong, took their place in the stalls at the

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<sup>33</sup> Prestige *op. cit.* 85

<sup>34</sup> *The Musical Standard* 18 January 1873, 30

entrance to the choir instead of on the orchestra formerly used under the monster organ. Another important alteration consisted in the substitution of a hymn from Hymns Ancient and Modern in the place of the anthem.<sup>35</sup>

Stainer rehearsed this choir in the Chapter House every Friday evening, and became a great favourite with its members, for he included it in the annual performances of Mendelssohn's *St Paul* and Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, and varied its rehearsals with secular music. One thing only remains to be added: the assertion by Stainer's biographer that 'his startling innovation to replace the boys by lady singers who were in some way attached to the cathedral also caused some indignation'<sup>36</sup> is a complete misunderstanding of the facts and the very opposite of what actually happened!

**'After eighteen months in office he had a bad nervous breakdown.'** This would have been in the autumn of 1874, but the press and the cathedral's records are both devoid of information on the subject. However, almost exactly a year later he was playing a game of Fives with Ouseley at Tenbury when he suffered injury to his one good eye (the other had been lost in childhood) severe enough to cause his absence from work for several months, and this is well attested by the minutes of the Weekly Chapter. On 16 October 1875 they record that 'Dr Stainer's place has been filled by Mr Martin<sup>37</sup> in a manner which leaves nothing to be desired;' on 29 January 1876 he was granted leave of absence, and in his final report on his retirement from the office of Succentor (25 March 1876) Webber remarked that 'the services upon the whole have not been so satisfactorily performed as they used to be – partly owing to the absence of Dr Stainer.' Sir Joseph Barnby conducted the performance of the *St Matthew Passion* that April, and Walker took charge of the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy; but Stainer was back on 3 June to conduct Handel's *Dettingen Te Deum* at a service of thanksgiving for the return of the Prince of Wales.

Finally, what of the state of the cathedral's music at the end of those legendary two years (the adjective is carefully chosen)? The answer has to be that things were only just beginning to improve, for several reasons beyond Stainer's control: he took office on Lady Day, 25 March 1872, but the number of choristers was not increased at all until

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<sup>35</sup> *The Choir* 11 January 1873, 18

<sup>36</sup> Charlton *op. cit.* 58

<sup>37</sup> The future Sir George Martin, Organist of St Paul's 1888-1916, at that time Music Master in the Choir School

January 1873, and it was exactly a year from his taking office before they and eight additional men were formally admitted to the choir. During this year (1872-3) performing standards rose slightly,<sup>38</sup> but the choir remained no more audible to listeners under the dome:

Dr Stainer's playing [was] most able and tasteful: but the choir was so weak in point of numbers that not one fourth of the congregation could possibly have heard what was being sung....And no wonder, for the whole body consisted of only about twenty voices : - nine or ten men, and the same number of boys; and although it contained some excellent singers, who all did their best, still it was quite inadequate to its task.<sup>39</sup>

Chapter was presented with a weekly litany of complaints throughout 1872 (and to a decreasing extent in subsequent years). On 27 April 'The organist reported the services of this afternoon as being excessively bad,' and one can only wish that he had gone into detail:<sup>40</sup> unfortunately the reports of Stainer and the Succentor on the state of the choir, submitted on 7 July, seem not to have survived. On 17 August it was reported that 'twice, on Sunday and Wednesday, the anthem had to be changed on account of the counter-tenor being unable to sing his part,' the Sunday anthem was *Rejoice in the Lord alway* (Purcell), hardly a difficult proposition.

Summonses to appear before Chapter were frequent, though their effect might be lessened by the Succentor's frequent failure to pass them on immediately. Matters improved but slowly: in one week in September there were three occasions when only four men were present, and on 7 December the Succentor 'complained that Mr Mattacks is inefficient through nervousness.' Even when things went according to plan, the workings of the rota system were such that on Friday mornings only five men attended, three of whom were tenors.

It had long been recognised that a substantial increase in the size of the choir was necessary: in January 1870 Goss had recommended eighteen men and between twenty-four and thirty boys,<sup>41</sup> and at last the Ecclesiastical Commissioners provided the

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<sup>38</sup> *The Choir* 17 August 1872, 94

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.* 31 August 1872, 134, describing the music of Sunday 25 August, when the music was *King in C* and *The glory of the Lord* (Goss)

<sup>40</sup> William A. Frost, *Early Recollections of St Paul's Cathedral* (London: Simpkin, Marshall Hamilton, Kent, 1925), 16

<sup>41</sup> 'John Goss', *The Musical Times* 1 June 1901, 381

necessary funds for the building of a choir-school and for the appointment of another eight Assistant Vicars-Choral from Lady-Day 1873. These eight new Assistants were auditioned in December 1872 and included some distinguished singers who gave long and faithful service: another was appointed almost immediately when a Vicar-Choral died and Stainer took the vacant freehold, to the inevitable displeasure of *The Musical Standard*.<sup>42</sup> All Assistant Vicars-Choral were placed in a contributory pension scheme, with retirement at sixty: the Vicars-Choral retained their freehold (and much better pay), and Assistants were promoted by seniority to fill any vacancies that arose, usually by death.

It took much longer to do anything about the boys. The Revd Alfred Barff was appointed Master of the Choir Boys and School on 26 June 1872, but the securing of a suitable site for a new choir-school was a difficult and lengthy business: the ultimate aim was to have some forty boys, but all that could be done meanwhile was to appoint eleven additional boys in January 1873, who were lodged in No. 1 Amen Court for the time being, the existing dozen or so continuing as day-boys.<sup>43</sup> Not until early in 1875 was the new choir-house in Carter Lane ready for occupation, and the initial impact of the additional boys was to the detriment of even such poor standards as existed. Complaints by Chapter abounded in February and March 1873: the Dean complained that the boys' singing at Evensong on Friday 28 February was very faulty, but perhaps the Succentor had been unwise to entrust them with *Patrick in G minor* and *O God, thou art my God* (Purcell). Blow's *Save me, O God* failed exactly a month later from the same cause. Some of the first batch of boys were dubious characters: one Timsbury was suspended for fourteen days in April; ApThomas suffered indefinite suspension in May (but was given a last chance a month later), and in February 1874 Mr Wilkinson was requested to withdraw his son Alfred, who had already been expelled from the choir of the Temple Church. As late as September 1874 the Succentor could report that 'the boys are still far from perfect in the Responses and Psalms.'<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *The Musical Standard* 22 February 1873, 115

<sup>43</sup> Prestige *op. cit.* 156-7

<sup>44</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 8 & 15 February, 1 & 29 March, 12 April, 17 May, 14 June 1873; 21 February, 28 September 1874

The one conspicuous success of these two years was the institution in 1873 of special services with orchestra and enlarged choir; Mendelssohn's *St Paul* on the Patronal Festival (25 January, the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul); Bach's *Passion according to St Matthew* on the Tuesday in Holy Week (following the example of Joseph Barnby's performances in Westminster Abbey); and at the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy in May, for which Stainer revived the tradition of commissioning a new anthem or service setting. Whether or not Stainer himself underwrote the costs of *St Paul*,<sup>45</sup> he had to convince a nervous Chapter that all would be seemly, and he succeeded triumphantly to general critical acclaim. He played to his strengths: much of *St Paul* was already familiar to those who took part, there were some excellent soloists among the regular choirmen and a couple of good solo boys, and the numerical weakness of the cathedral choir was disguised by the large number of additional singers. The clothing of the orchestra in surplices left no-one in any doubt that it was an act of worship, not a concert. The performance of selections from the *St Matthew Passion* was on generally similar lines, with the ubiquitous Fred. Walker playing the continuo part on the pianoforte.

This is but an introduction to the immense task which confronted those who set out to create a model and standard of cathedral worship whose influence may still be discerned. More detailed study of the slow and at times disheartening process of establishing proper discipline will follow, and also an analysis of the musical repertory tabulated in Appendices 2-6, which underwent significant pruning and alteration after 1873 and took on a very different complexion under a new and much more imaginative Succentor (the Revd William Sparrow Simpson) from Lady-Day 1876. Stainer himself acknowledged that 'when he [Sparrow Simpson] succeeded the Rev. T. (*sic*) Fynes-Webber, the musical condition of the Cathedral was still more or less unsettled, and it may safely be said that it required a hand at once firm and kind to secure that stability which alone could ensure the *future* of music in St. Paul's.'<sup>46</sup>

It would be foolish to disregard such a summary of the situation four whole years after Stainer's appointment, coming as it were straight from the horse's mouth. The plans for future success were well laid by the end of Stainer's first two years, and to that

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<sup>45</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 40

<sup>46</sup> W. J. Sparrow Simpson, *Memoir of the Revd W. Sparrow Simpson* (London: Longman, 1899), 67-8

extent the Dean and Chapter would indeed have been well satisfied, but the claim that the choir had attained world-wide fame by then is manifestly untrue. Equally false is the picture of Stainer struggling heroically and almost alone against impossible odds: he was content to bide his time, to do the best he could until conditions improved, and to win the support of his colleagues meanwhile. It is well to re-iterate that the Succentor chose the music and that the singing-master rehearsed the boys, tasks that are both the province of present-day Cathedral Organists: Stainer was but one of a team, and when that team was strengthened in 1876 by a new Succentor and a new Sub-Organist, George Martin, who had by then had charge of the boys for two years, more rapid progress was possible.

## SUCCENTOR WEBBER - AN UNWILLING REFORMER? (1872-76)

Nearly my first care on entering upon my duties was to draw up a list of Services to be used in the cathedral during the year, and to arrange them, as far as I was able, in such an order as to avoid repetition, and to secure that each service should be heard in its turn. The Scheme has been found very valuable in obviating the natural tendency to use only a few favorite (*sic*) Services, to the exclusion of many others equally deserving a place in the Succentor's bills.

(W. Sparrow Simpson, Preface to his first Succentor's Report, 1877)

It is usually safe to assume that what the new man does immediately, his predecessor failed to do, and this implied rebuke of the Revd W. C. Fynes Webber, whom Sparrow Simpson succeeded on Lady-Day 1876, only repeats obliquely the open criticism of him in the musical press.<sup>1</sup> At least there were soon to be printed music-lists, for on Stainer's proposal Chapter decided that 'all the services for a given month should be printed, as at St Andrew's, Wells Street, and distributed among members of the choir and throughout the Church. It was decided to take counsel with Mr Webber as to the form and expense of such a paper.'<sup>2</sup> This was to prove by no means the only respect in which St Andrew's, Wells Street provided a model for the cathedral's music.<sup>3</sup>

The production of these lists, though in a weekly rather than monthly format, began in January 1873, but examination of them produces the impression that they merely reproduce the abbreviations used in the hand-written lists previously submitted. If they avoid the sometimes comical brevity of the advertisements on the cover of old Novello anthems,<sup>4</sup> they are frequently not much better: 'Wherewithal Elvey,' 'My God, my God, Mendelssohn' and 'I beheld and Lo! Blow' are actual examples which can have left the average member of the congregation little the wiser. Of rather more importance is the

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<sup>1</sup> v. *supra*, Chapter 1, pp.3-4

<sup>2</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 21 December 1872

<sup>3</sup> For the influence of St Andrew's, Wells Street during Barnby's time as Organist see Bernarr Rainbow, *The Choral Revival in the Anglican Church 1839-72* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1970), 276ff.

<sup>4</sup> 'Why assemble the Rheinberger' and 'The Lord gave A. C. Mackenzie 2d' are the classic examples.

actual musical content of the lists, which are tabulated in Appendices 2-6, due allowance having been made for their inclusion of non-existent titles or composer-less anthems and services.

What is immediately obvious is that many works disappeared after 1873, never to return; eighteen Morning, six Communion and fourteen Evening Services, and sixty-seven anthems, with no corresponding gains in the years immediately following but equally no further serious losses except among the Evening Services (another thirteen after 1874) and the anthems of Boyce, Croft, Greene and other Georgian composers. This purging was to be continued by Webber's successor, an asterisk in the list of anthems<sup>5</sup> denoting those dropped after 1875: the Services survived rather better because the supply was so limited. Thus the repertory was greatly reduced as Stainer settled into his duties, this reduction coinciding with the increase in the size of the choir, and it was mainly the works of the old 'Cathedral Composers' which were thrown out.

The reasons for this were both practical and aesthetic, and a good starting-point is to consider the way in which the choir had functioned before the upheavals of the 1870s. The choice of music was circumscribed equally by what was available and by the number and capability of the singers: the Cathedral possessed sets of the anthologies by Arnold, Boyce and Page, which contained the standard Anthems and Services by composers from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, and the collected works of Attwood, Bellamy, Boyce, Croft, Greene, Hayes, Kent, Nares and Pring.<sup>6</sup> The collection edited by Goss and Turle (1843) was a more recent addition, and of course Goss's anthems enjoyed the prominent position appropriate to the works of the cathedral's organist. Of other recent or contemporary composers, the anthems and especially the services of Barnby, Elvey, Garrett, Hopkins, Ouseley, Smart and Walmisley were coming into use: the relative neglect of Samuel Sebastian Wesley is striking and to modern taste inexplicable. Great use was also made of excerpts from Handel's *Messiah*, and Mendelssohn's oratorios and shorter works were also beginning to be drawn upon. Novello's octavo editions were hardly in evidence, for most music was still in folio or in single voice-parts.

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<sup>5</sup> Appendix 5, q.v.

<sup>6</sup> *Anthems in the printed books in the choir of St Paul's, London*; undated 19<sup>th</sup>c. pamphlet in the Cathedral Library



Chapter's request that the Succentor or his deputy should present a list of the following week's anthems each Saturday<sup>7</sup> seems to suggest that nothing so organised had happened until then. The choirmen's attendance had frequently been so erratic that anthems were chosen at the last minute to suit the available forces: this inevitably resulted in the extensive use of solo or verse anthems, in which the chorus parts were brief and could be read at sight, and in which the undoubtedly fine voices of individual singers could be heard to good effect. The canticle-settings most favoured were those by Kelway, Kempton, King, Nares, Travers and other worthies of the eighteenth century, stigmatised by the elder Wesley as 'harmless chords,'<sup>8</sup> technically undemanding, supported by an organ part which merely doubled the voices; and thus well suited to the forces available, which were meagre, frequently incomplete and above all never rehearsed, a situation by no means unique to St Paul's. The rather better settings of the morning canticles by Boyce in A and C and by Croft in A were also in common use, with the Evening Services in A by Samuel Arnold and Stephen Elvey written to complete those by Boyce and Croft respectively. Of the earlier works included in the collections by Boyce and others only 'Gibbons in F'<sup>9</sup> was in frequent use.

Fortunately the transition from the old ways to the new is well documented: it has been possible to discover most of what was sung on Sundays from January 1871 until the publication of the first printed lists in 1873.<sup>10</sup> During this period Stainer took up his duties on 25 March 1872, but no significant change occurred in the personnel of the choir.

The music in 1871 is clearly of the traditional 'cathedral school', and of the fifty anthems recorded thirty-one are from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, ten of them by Greene. The range of Services is a little wider, though the morning canticles of *Garrett in D* occur six times: the inclusion of the recently-published *Parry in D* at Evensong on 10 December is noteworthy, and as Stainer had not yet been appointed this

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<sup>7</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 31 December 1870

<sup>8</sup> Source unknown, quoted in Christopher Dearnley, 'The Need for a Reformed Approach to Church Music', *English Church Music 1969* (Croydon: RSCM), 23

<sup>9</sup> Nowadays usually known as the Short Service.

<sup>10</sup> Appendix 1, q.v.

cannot be due to his friendship with Parry. The 1872 list shows little advance, though the inclusion of *Stainer in E flat* displays a courteous recognition of the new organist's appointment: there is, however, a substantial increase in the performance of Mendelssohn's works, nine anthems as opposed to two. A worshipper at Mattins encountering *Hopkins in F* for the sixth time that year, or *Travers in F* on 7 January, 18 February and 17 March, might well agree with the inhabitants of Barchester that 'the anthems and Te Deums were in themselves delightful, but they had been heard so often!'<sup>11</sup> The Succentor's inclusion of more Mendelssohn may perhaps have been in response to published criticism of his choice of music.<sup>12</sup>

1873 was the year of greatest change in the composition of the choir: on 25 March the additional choristers and eight additional men appointed at the end of 1872 began singing,<sup>13</sup> and henceforth even on a weekday twelve men and around twenty-four boys were on duty, with another six men on Sundays. Once the choir-school was fully established the number of boys rose to thirty, plus eight probationers. (It is interesting that much the same thing was happening at Trinity College, Cambridge under the recently-appointed Stanford.) The printed lists issued from January 1873<sup>14</sup> illustrate two parallel trends, the rejection of music that no longer suited the conditions of performance or the taste of the times, and the beginnings of an exercise of discipline in its choice.

A striking feature of 1873 is the number of works performed only once and then discarded: equally striking is the excessive use of others. What we have, in fact, is an encapsulation of the old way of doing things, with the music library and singers treated much as one would treat a collection of recorded music, to be picked off the shelf at whim for instant performance. Seasonal anthems, of course, almost choose themselves; but without the system adopted by Webber's successors, of choosing canticle-settings in a rota covering several weeks, the choice of these depended on the Succentor's mood or memory. Some weeks in 1873 are dull, some inventive, some wildly impracticable, and some repeat a whole day's music from the previous week. The provision of a book for

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<sup>11</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Barchester Towers* (London, 1856), Ch. VII

<sup>12</sup> *Musical Standard*, 25 February 1871, 87, & *passim*

<sup>13</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 45

<sup>14</sup> Appendices 2-6, *qq. v.*

the congregation containing the words of anthems, on 26 April 1875, seems to have reminded the Succentor of several good things he had overlooked for some time, for the weekly lists seem to gain a new lease of life after this.

Some of the older anthems and services may have been abandoned for the practical and quite prosaic reason that there were not enough copies for the enlarged choir, the music being in collections no longer obtainable and it not being thought worth the effort of writing out additional copies by hand. In any case, only the men had ever been supplied with the volumes of Boyce, Arnold and other standard collections: manuscript single-part copies of anything to be performed were made for the boys as required, as was standard practice in all cathedrals. At Durham in the 1870s Dr Armes gave this task to his articulated pupils.<sup>15</sup> Because the size of the St Paul's choir had been almost doubled, it was a major undertaking suddenly to equip it with enough copies of music, as Webber reported to Chapter: 'It will be necessary, in order to be able to perform the services and anthems required, to make a large addition to the music books of the Choristers and also to those of the Organist. Those of the men are nearly complete.'<sup>16</sup> Frost describes how new books of single parts (not, it will be noted, octavo vocal scores) were bound together in 1873, when the choir was enlarged: the contents were selected by Stainer and Barnby, and included much by the currently-fashionable Gounod, which Webber never put into the lists except for *Jesu, our Lord* and one or two other trifles.<sup>17</sup> This is interesting evidence both of his old-fashioned tastes and of his control over what was sung; for all the Organist could do was to include suitable items in the library in the hope that they might be used, and even in doing this he was in fact exceeding his powers.

At the time of Stainer's appointment fears were expressed lest

...the schools of Purcell, Blow, Croft, Boyce, Greene, and Wesley may, in the impending changes, be made less prominent than heretofore....Owing to the very ineffective choral performance which has lately been the rule, an entire alteration in the style of music may commend itself to the Dean and Chapter, but this, or a too constant use of full anthems, would be wholly fatal to delicacy in singing and contrary to tradition and precedent.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Thomas H. Collinson, *The Diary of an Organist's Apprentice at Durham Cathedral 1871-1875* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1982), 25, 27-8

<sup>16</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 6 October 1873

<sup>17</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 63

<sup>18</sup> *The Choir* 6 January 1872, 3

These words are strangely prophetic, though the ‘entire alteration in the style of music’ belongs rather to the regime of Webber’s successor, whose views, propounded in a succession of published reports, corresponded almost exactly with the principles enunciated by Stainer in a lecture to the Church Congress at Leeds in the autumn of 1872.<sup>19</sup>

On that occasion Stainer argued for the principle that the best specimens of all styles should be selected for use, and he was especially scathing about the less-inspired examples of the contrapuntal style. In fact there was little enough of this genre in use at St Paul’s, but he made no secret of his distaste for the weaker specimens of the ‘Cathedral Style’ with which he would have been all too familiar ever since his days as a St Paul’s chorister. Of Pelham Humfrey and his school he had this to say:

The effect on English Church music was disastrous. There can be no mistake about the characteristics of Anglo-French music; anthems in this style have generally little independent symphonies on the organ called *ritornelli*; the chief part of the performance is nearly always allotted to a trio for an alto, tenor and bass voice, interspersed with solos: all the movements are broken up into short sentences, and there is frequent change from duple to triple measure; above all things, they possess strongly-marked rhythm, frequently quite commonplace and vulgar, but which no doubt gave great pleasure to the restored royal toes as they beat time on the floor of St James’s Palace. Some of the compositions of Dr Blow, Pelham Humphreys and Henry Purcell are the best specimens of Anglo-French Music: but these men had a host of followers and imitators who almost monopolised our cathedrals for more than a century. Indeed so strongly has it left its mark that many persons still uphold it as the true Cathedral style, and are weak enough to call it distinctively English simply because no other nation was so foolish as to borrow it from the French.

It must however be said in extenuation of the popularity of this style of music, that pieces for *sol*i voices were thoroughly adapted for our small collegiate chapels, and for that small portion of many of our cathedrals cut off and formed into a separate church by an organ screen. In the days when the organ of St Paul’s separated the chancel from the rest of the Church only seven hundred persons could attend the service, and that not without inconvenience. For this limited space six vicars-choral and twelve boys could supply the requisite music with fairly good effect (or rather, five vicars-choral and the deputed representative of the organist, himself a vicar-choral): and this was the only choir the Cathedral possessed until within the last quarter of a century.<sup>20</sup>

If Stainer did not have a high opinion of Greene’s verse anthems, much preferring full anthems such as *O clap your hands together* and *I will sing of thy power* in which ‘he rose to a high standard of merit,’<sup>21</sup> it must again be emphasised that he was not in a

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<sup>19</sup> Full text in *The Choir* 26 October 1872, 256-8

<sup>20</sup> G. Phillips Bevan and John Stainer, *Handbook to the Cathedral of St Paul* (London: Sonnenschein, 1882), 75-6

<sup>21</sup> Bevan and Stainer *op. cit.* 86

position to forbid their use. The verse anthems of Blow, Boyce, Croft and Greene did indeed fall into disuse after 1873, but the reason could well be the practical one that it made little sense to double the size of the choir only for most of its members to have hardly anything to sing: it may also have occurred at last to Webber that lengthy solos and trios were ineffective in the wide open spaces of the re-ordered cathedral, as they are still considered to be.<sup>22</sup> The losses were largely made good by singing the rest of the repertory more often: some short full anthems, suitable for weekday Mattins or as Introits at the Holy Communion, might be sung as many as ten or eleven times in a year. The few novelties were performed frequently: in 1874 there were ten performances of *O Lord correct me* (Coward); eleven of *Jesu, Word of God incarnate* (Mozart); seven of *Lead, kindly light* (Stainer) and seven of *God so loved the world* (Thorne). Handel and Mendelssohn were of course a fruitful source of arias and choruses from oratorios: the fashion for Bach, Gounod, Spohr and Sullivan lay in the future.

Liturgical developments at St Paul's in 1873 had important consequences for the choice of settings of the Morning, Communion and (to a lesser extent) Evening Services. For Morning Prayer (Mattins) pre-Commonwealth composers had tended to set *Te Deum* and *Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel* (not to be confused with *Benedictus qui venit* in the 1549 Communion Service), though some of the Services of later composers of this school, such as Gibbons, Tomkins and Weelkes, contain *Jubilate Deo* instead. After the Restoration this trend became more pronounced, and *Benedictus* was hardly ever set, no doubt because of the prevailing wish for brevity which impoverished almost all canticle settings for the next couple of centuries: *Benedicite*, the lengthy and repetitive alternative to *Te Deum*, was almost entirely ignored, *Purcell in B flat* being the only example to have attained any popularity. However, the new Chapter of St Paul's had a vision of a complete daily and weekly pattern of worship, a belated realisation of the ideals embodied in the Book of Common Prayer, which led it to decree that *Benedicite* should in future be sung in place of *Te Deum* at Mattins on every day of the week from Ash Wednesday to Easter Eve inclusive.<sup>23</sup> Advent was to be similarly favoured: in the absence of any settings of this canticle it had to be sung to

<sup>22</sup> Information supplied by Mr John Scott, the current Organist of St Paul's

<sup>23</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 29 January 1873

chants, the effect no doubt being the desired one of adding to the general gloom of Penitential Seasons.

There then followed a decision that *Benedictus*, the only Gospel canticle in Mattins, should be used on every day of the week except Wednesday and Friday, when the Litany was sung after the service and some brevity might be in order.<sup>24</sup> Frost describes how after lunch on St Paul's day, four days after this decree (when Webber incurred his displeasure by smoking, a habit which he thought 'silly, injurious and enslaving') the Succentor complained of the difficulty of meeting Chapter's request when the only settings available were *Garrett in E*, *Gibbons*, *Hopkins in F* and *Walmisley in D*.<sup>25</sup> Presumably in a spirit of helpfulness, Chapter had suggested that surely the music of *Jubilate* would fit *Benedictus* instead!

Frost goes on to say that Stainer then composed a setting in A of *Benedictus* to go with the *Te Deum* of Mendelssohn in A and Croft in A, the latter a most incongruous coupling; and that settings were soon added by their original composers to *Barnby in E*, *Calkin in B flat*, *Garrett in D* and *in F*, *Goss in D*, *Smart in F*, *Tours in F* and *Turle in D*.<sup>26</sup> The detailed accuracy of this statement is open to question, for there were other settings already in use, notably *Ouseley in B minor* (thirteen performances in 1873), and those by Gounod and Stainer had already enjoyed their first performances; but the overall impression is correct: there was for a long time a shortage of settings, and this explains the record thirty-one performances of *Benedictus* (sometimes with the *Te Deum* of another service) attained by both *Gibbons in F* and *Hopkins in F* in 1874, with *Garrett in D* and *Walmisley in D* not far behind. What seems inexplicable is that the settings by Byrd, Farrant, Patrick and Tallis saw so little use, but their beauties may not have been very obvious in a performance at written pitch by singers with little experience of the idiom: indeed, *Byrd in D minor* was dropped completely for some years after 1873.

Gounod's lengthy and flamboyant setting of the Morning Service was welcomed enthusiastically, its *Benedictus* receiving five performances in March 1874 alone, and it survived in regular use until at least 1916. The *Te Deum* in C (Ex.1) had been written

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<sup>24</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 21 January 1874

<sup>25</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 52

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* 53

**Example 1**  
Gounod : *Te Deum* in C

world without end... We wor-ship thy Name, e-ver world with-out end, e-ver

world with-out end... We wor-ship thy Name, e-ver world with-out end, e-ver

world with-out end... We wor-ship thy Name, e-ver world with-out end, e-ver

world with-out end... We wor-ship thy Name, e-ver world with-out end, e-ver

world with-out end, with-out end, . . e-ver world,

world with-out end, with-out end, . . e-ver world,

world with-out end, with-out end, . . e-ver world,

world with-out end, with-out end, . . e-ver world,

without invitation for the Prince of Wales' Thanksgiving Service in 1872: on its firm rejection by Goss, Gounod dedicated it instead to the Dean of St Paul's and added *Benedictus*, *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis*.<sup>27</sup> With a fine disregard of convention these were all in different keys, respectively G, D and B flat, and at a total cost of 2/9d per copy were remarkably expensive.

*Ouseley in B minor* was dropped as soon as other settings became available to replace it, but of the rest the greater number remained in regular use until the early 1920s at least. St Paul's had given a lead which was to be widely followed: the demand for settings of this canticle was well established in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, and most if not all of the Services of this period contain both *Benedictus* and *Jubilate* to make them suitable for all requirements.

Another of Chapter's decisions was to have equally far-reaching effects. After much inconclusive discussion,<sup>28</sup> and with some persistent attempts to move the starting-time to 9.30 a.m.,<sup>29</sup> a fully choral celebration of the Holy Communion, immediately following Morning Prayer at 10.30, took place every Sunday from the Sunday after Easter 1873 : this pattern survived at St Paul's until Advent Sunday 1994, was widely imitated, and is still followed in a few cathedrals.<sup>30</sup> Previously St Paul's had followed the practice traditional in most cathedrals since the Reformation: the Responses to the Commandments and the Creed were sung by the choir (most Morning Services included these, so they are not always mentioned separately on service lists) and the choir departed at the Offertory. If *Sanctus* had been set, it was sung as an Introit: settings of *Gloria in excelsis* were almost unknown after the 1549 Prayer Book had been replaced by the more 'Protestant' versions of 1552 and 1559, apart from a few inspired by the High Church revival in the early seventeenth century, led by Laud, Cosin and their followers.<sup>31</sup> This singing of the Ante-Communion, or 'Second Service,' continued at St Paul's on Saints' days until Webber's retirement, with the anthem at Mattins serving as

<sup>27</sup> James Harding, *Gounod* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973), 158

<sup>28</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 19 October 1871

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* 1 March & 14 June 1873; on 28 June it was agreed that no change be made until Advent Sunday, and then the whole business seems to have been quietly forgotten, doubtless to everyone's relief.

<sup>30</sup> e.g. Chichester, Durham & Hereford: remarkably, it was reinstated at St Paul's at the beginning of March 1998.

<sup>31</sup> Edmund H. Fellowes, *English Cathedral Music* (London: Methuen, 1941), 1-5



the Introit to the Communion Service; but on Sundays there was now a need for complete settings with *Sanctus* and *Gloria* and, for preference, Gospel responses, *Sursum corda* and final Amen as well. The form of service in the 1662 Prayer Book was strictly followed: what was termed *Kyrie* was the Responses to the Commandments, not the nine-fold *Kyrie eleison*; nor were *Benedictus qui venit* and *Agnus Dei* sung, not being in the 1662 rite.

At a stroke most of the choir's existing repertory, such as it was, had been rendered useless: *Barnby in E*, *Calkin in B flat*, *Garrett in D*, *Ouseley in A* and *in E*, *Smart in F* and *Wesley in E* (a strange hotch-potch in different keys and styles) did duty for the next three years, with the addition of *Monk in C* and *Stainer in E flat* in 1874. Whether such a limited selection was the result of the choir's incapacity or the Succentor's lack of imagination one can only guess: more colourful settings were already available, and, needless to say, in use at such fashionable churches as St Andrew's, Wells Street.<sup>32</sup>

The music for the Office of Evening Prayer, or Evensong, was subject to similar trends: several older settings were thrown out, and also any such as *Hopkins in A* which set the alternative canticles *Cantate Domino* (Psalm 98) and *Deus misereatur* (Psalm 67), although these do not seem to have been subject to a formal prohibition. The only additions, all during 1875, were *Dykes in F*, *Gadsby in C* and an un-named setting by Palestrina, a most unexpected choice in the light of the prevailing disdain for 'early music.' Of more significance was the decision, after a few months when half the boys in turn were excused Evensong on Saturdays,<sup>33</sup> to give them all a half-holiday together and have Evensong sung by the men alone; at first every Wednesday from 8 October 1873 and then every Thursday from 25 February 1875, an arrangement which still continues. Frost was proud of the fact that when the day was changed to Thursday he and another alto were brought in as extras to compensate for the inadequacies of their two oldest colleagues Barrett and Francis, whose duty happened to fall on that day, the arrangement continuing until Francis retired in 1876.<sup>34</sup>

There was favourable interest from at least one musical journal:

<sup>32</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 66 recalls recommending *Schubert in B flat* from that source.

<sup>33</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 15 March 1873; Frost *op. cit.* 48 says that it was Wednesday, not Saturday, possibly confusing it with later arrangements.

<sup>34</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 49

The introduction of a service sung by men's voices only at St. Paul's will, unless we are much mistaken, draw a large congregation to the Wednesday Evensong at the Cathedral. Male voice music is so little known or understood in this country that many people seem to be under the impression that legitimate harmony can only be produced where a treble is singing the "top line."<sup>35</sup>

The anonymous correspondent went on to praise Stainer's 'innovative impetus to composition' as being useful for universities and colleges and in giving cathedral choristers a day off. This innovative impulse took the form of *Stainer in D*, a tuneful and imaginative essay in this difficult medium, which is still sung in some places: its scoring for ATTB is well matched to the forces available to him, with passages given to a quartet of soloists for variety, and the Gloria (common to both canticles) ends with a rousing fugue (Ex. 2), part of the subject making a final appearance in the last few bars with voices in unison backed by a solo Tromba stop on the organ. This and a service in A by Stainer's friend Henry Gadsby did duty for the rest of 1873, and remained the most popular even after another four settings joined them during 1874: only another two were added in the next year.

At least there were some anthems already available. Trio movements from the Verse anthems of Boyce and Croft could be sung Full, and Tallis' *If ye love me* was restored to its proper AATB scoring: from the ubiquitous Mendelssohn came part of *Christus*, Latin motets in English translation, and two movements from *Fest Gesang*, originally an occasional cantata celebrating the invention of printing but now provided with English sacred words.<sup>36</sup> The 'innovative impulse to composition' inspired various composers to produce new works, including a setting of *Hail, gladdening light* by the ever-ready Gounod; but the total remained small, and in any case some caution was no bad thing, as the singing of male-voice music is something of an acquired art: furthermore it is by no means to be assumed that any regular rehearsals were yet taking place.<sup>37</sup> As yet there were no other occasions when all the boys were away at once, and thus the men did not sing any Morning or Communion Services on their own.

Now that half the boys were boarded, and the whole complement would in due course be boarders at the new choir-school, some sort of extended holiday had become

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<sup>35</sup> *The Choir* 18 October 1873, 238

<sup>36</sup> This is the source of Mendelssohn's tune to *Hark! the herald-angels sing*.

<sup>37</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 47

### Example 2

**Stainer : Evening Service in D, *Gloria Patri***

[illegible]

essential. From 1873 to 1885 the boys were granted a month's leave during the summer and short breaks after Christmas and Easter, half at a time, leaving the other half to maintain the services.<sup>38</sup> The Succentor regretted this arrangement:

In consequence of the boys' holidays, and the want of practice for ten weeks, [the services] were more or less deficient during the months of July and August; at the same time that the congregations were very large and full of strangers. During that time only the most familiar and easy music could be performed.<sup>39</sup>

He still felt able to put down during August *O clap your hands* (Greene) and *Judge me, O God* (Mendelssohn), lengthy works with a divided treble part, so he was not being entirely sympathetic to the situation. Fortunately matters were very much improved next year, with the services 'very well done...considering the absence of the boys for holidays';<sup>40</sup> but a fundamental weakness of the new arrangements had been exposed, for it had been proved from the outset that daily services could not be maintained throughout the year without some compromise of musical standards.

Webber relinquished the office of Succentor on Lady-Day, 25 March 1876. His valedictory report to Chapter sounds a note of caution, even of pessimism: 'The services upon the whole have not been so satisfactorily performed as they used to be – partly owing to the absence of Dr Stainer. The boys, though progressing, are far from the desirable efficiency as to solo singing.'<sup>41</sup> Rome was not built in a day! Stainer had suffered the accident described in the previous chapter, and it noteworthy that Martin, singing-master at the school since 1874, took his place at the organ rather than George Cooper, the elderly Sub-Organist, who died later that year.<sup>42</sup>

It is difficult to assess Webber's contribution to the musical revival at St Paul's. He may have been a stumbling-block to progress: there was a marked expansion of musical activity as soon as his successor took over, but it is equally possible that conditions were not favourable until then, for the early days of the choir-school and Webber's

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<sup>38</sup> Prestige *op. cit.* 158

<sup>39</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 28 September 1874

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* 16 October 1875

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.* 25 March 1876

<sup>42</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 60, 63. The full rehearsals of the choir were taken by Walker, Martin's predecessor as singing-master, until Stainer's return.

battles on Chapter's behalf to establish discipline in the attendance and punctuality of the Vicars-Choral have yet to be discussed. *The City Press*, with its customary malevolent interest in St Paul's, took him to task as a example of pluralism:

He is the Rector of St Botolph Aldersgate, has a rectory in Charterhouse Square, but lets it and lives near Sevenoaks. He comes up to preach at his church on Sunday mornings, and as Succentor makes out a weekly bill for the music at St Paul's, which the choir is required to perform in his absence.<sup>43</sup>

His was the old way of doing things at St Paul's, and perhaps he never could adapt fully to a new and more enthusiastic era; but it can be argued in his defence that he had to cope with nothing short of a sudden revolution in the style of musical choice and performance required, and met the challenge to the best of his ability, albeit without a great deal of imagination and not always with great efficiency. He invented a *Jubilate* of *Gibbons in F* on 26 June 1874, though he had rediscovered the *Benedictus* in time to put it down for Friday 28 May 1875 when he should have selected a *Jubilate*! He had earlier incurred Chapter's displeasure for a similar act of carelessness, when 'Jubilate [Walmisley in C] was used instead of Benedictus this morning – to be brought to the notice of the Succentor and Organist.'<sup>44</sup>

He was the last survivor of the older generation of dignitaries still to occupy a prominent and important office, and such minute day-to-day interest in his domain by the Dean and Chapter was a startling and possibly unwelcome innovation. From whatever motives, and whether or not directly influenced by the published views of the new Organist, he had brought about a marked change in the style of music selected for cathedral services. At his funeral in July 1881 he was described by the Precentor of Westminster Abbey as 'a friend of the poor and a successful healer of division, if somewhat abrupt in manner';<sup>45</sup> and there is many a worse epitaph than that.

<sup>43</sup> *The City Press*, 14 December 1872

<sup>44</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 25 April 1874

<sup>45</sup> Unidentified press-cutting dated 6 July 1881, in scrapbook in St Paul's Cathedral library

## THE FORMATION OF THE NEW CHOIR (1872-6)

These men [the choir] have had their own way so long under the old régime that it is far easier to lead them than to drive them. They are like spoilt children and have points of dignity which no one but themselves would dream of.

(Dean Mansel to Canon Gregory, November 1869)<sup>1</sup>

Robert Gregory was appointed to his Canonry in December 1868, and began to apply a brisk efficiency to the Cathedral's administration. On the second day of his November residence in 1869, he

followed the vicars-choral to their vesting-place after Mattins and delivered a vigorous rebuke for the irregularity of their attendance and the consequent slovenliness of the services. His comments were promptly reproduced in the press of the whole country, to his own surprise and the dismay of his colleagues....But in the following month (17 December 1869) it was resolved to restore, as from the first week in 1870, the ancient practice enjoined in the statutes of holding a Chapter meeting every Saturday in order to take note of lapses in duty.<sup>2</sup>

This weekly meeting reviewed the attendance, punctuality and behaviour of all the cathedral's staff, but especially of the choirmen: fines or other punishments were enforced if Chapter had the power so to do, and serious or persistent offenders were summoned to appear in person. Other efforts were made to make the services more seemly: from Sunday 17 October 1869 the choir entered and left in a single procession; and included in a list of rules confirmed in May 1871 was the requirement that the supernumerary members of the choir must enter in the procession and remain until the end of the service. Fines, and regulations such as these, could unfortunately not be applied to the Vicars-Choral: a new and restrictive statute had been drawn up as long ago as 1848 but never applied, so Chapter now directed Gregory 'to prepare a new code of regulations to be laid before Chapter and submitted to the Bishop for his approval and ultimate confirmation in the shape of a new Statute.'<sup>3</sup> It was not until late in 1874

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<sup>1</sup> W. H. Hutton (ed.), *The Autobiography of Robert Gregory* (London, 1912), 168

<sup>2</sup> Prestige *op. cit.* 94-5

<sup>3</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 4 May 1871

that the new statute was confirmed.<sup>4</sup> It could not be made to apply to existing office-holders, and in any case both they and their successors continued to enjoy the protection of a freehold, which was ultimately abolished by Act of Parliament in 1931.

In the Middle Ages the men in Cathedral Choirs were in Holy Orders, but, as choir-music became more complex, clergy of sufficient musical skill could not always be found and laymen were allowed to take their place. This is the origin of the terms Vicar-Choral (Lat. *Vicarius*, a deputy), Lay-Vicar, and Lay-Clerk (as opposed to 'Clerk in Holy Orders') which survive to this day. After the Reformation the choir of St Paul's had ten boys, twelve clergy (the College of Minor Canons) and six lay Vicars-Choral,<sup>5</sup> but in time the Minor canons withdrew from choir duties, leaving just the six laymen: one of these was the organist, his singing duties delegated to a deputy paid by Chapter. How had they become so ungovernable?

The efficiency of even this small body was marred by the fact that the vicars gradually grew into a corporation...holding estates and using the proceeds of their property. This independence made the vicars negligent of their ordinary duties, and careless of the reputation of their cathedral. They attended irregularly, and were disinclined to bend to any authority whatsoever.<sup>6</sup>

The estates and property referred to included a share in the Cupola Fund, the fees paid by visitors to the Crypt, Dome and Galleries, in proportion to a Vicar-Choral's attendance: the number of visitors and hence the income available for distribution was much greater in summer, and the attendance in choir correspondingly better. The whole story of the reform of the Cathedral's finances and administration is a complicated one, which even Prestige's admirable account has some difficulty in making intelligible.<sup>7</sup> As late as June 1872 there had been no agreement with the Vicars-Choral, and a distribution from the Cupola Fund was made, but within the next two years the matter was settled: an 'agreement, surrender and release' between Dean and Chapter and all six Vicars-Choral divided up the Cupola Fund so as to give Goss £40, an unspecified share to be included in Stainer's salary, and £256 divided among the other four.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* 3 November 1874

<sup>5</sup> Peter Le Huray, *Music and the Reformation in England* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1967), 15

<sup>6</sup> Bevan and Stainer *op. cit.* 76

<sup>7</sup> Prestige *op. cit.* 52ff & *passim*

<sup>8</sup> *Dean & Chapter Muniment Book* 23 April 1874

The Great Exhibition of 1851, many of whose visitors came to the cathedral as worshippers or sightseers, had made the Dean and Chapter acutely conscious of the unsatisfactory nature of the choral services; and from that time 'desultory efforts to improve matters were made by the Dean and Chapter, until in 1873 they found themselves strong enough to reconstruct the whole choral foundation.'<sup>9</sup> At the time of Stainer's appointment the ultimate result of these 'desultory efforts' was that five vicars-choral and five 'supernumeraries' were available for Sunday duty; and each of the ten had to attend seven weekday services, seventy attendances in all. Unfortunately the arithmetic was faulty: six men (the basic minimum) at twelve services equals seventy-two attendances, and thus on two occasions, Wednesday and Friday mornings, only five were present. There were three altos, four tenors and three basses, so that even when six were present there were not always two of each voice, there being twenty-one alto or bass attendances available, but twenty-eight tenor. The most extraordinary result of this system was that on Friday mornings three of the five present were tenors: two were on Decani, joined by the Succentor (if present) singing bass.<sup>10</sup>

One of the Vicars-Choral had long since ceased to attend in person, and the question of their use of 'permanent deputies' deserves some comment, as the case of Charles Lockey has attained unmerited and excessive notoriety.<sup>11</sup> Lockey was a tenor appointed in 1844, whose voice unfortunately began to fail in 1859: the usual procedure was followed, and, as his freehold entitled him to do, he paid a succession of 'permanent deputies' who took his place in the choir until his death in 1901; though he was showing sufficient signs of recovery in 1861 to be the first-choice soloist for a performance of *Messiah* in the Cathedral to mark the installation of an organ in the South Transept to accompany the newly-introduced Sunday evening services.<sup>12</sup> In the event the famous Sims Reeves took his place. Lockey's case is remarkable only for the early age at which he withdrew from active duty: many other instances of this form of retirement can be found in the cathedral records, the difference between the cost of a deputy and a Vicar-Choral's income in effect providing the latter with a pension. Such

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<sup>9</sup> Bevan and Stainer *op. cit.* 79

<sup>10</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 17

<sup>11</sup> Scott *op. cit.* 28

<sup>12</sup> 'Sir John Goss', *Musical Times* 1 June 1901, 8



arrangements were not confined to the Church, for members of the learned professions, and even the nascent railway industry, often had to wait for their predecessor's death to enjoy their full salary. Contrary to what has been widely assumed,<sup>13</sup> the effect on the choir's singing was usually beneficial, as these 'permanent deputies' were young, up-and-coming singers who almost invariably graduated to full membership: at the time of Stainer's appointment, Lockey's deputy was Kerr Gedge, who was to take the tenor solos in the early performances of *St Paul* and the *St Matthew Passion*. The singing of occasional deputies, alas, was not always in the same class.

This was the choir inherited by Stainer on Lady Day 1872: four of the active members were freehold Vicars-Choral, Lockey and Goss being the other two. The altos were William Barrett, William Fielding and Thomas Francis: the first, a supernumerary, was a good musician but had a weak voice; the second though only some forty-four years of age was ill and retired within six months,<sup>14</sup> and the third was old and very difficult. One of the tenors was in need of immediate replacement:

The organist having reported that Mr [James] Shoubridge's voice is failing it was resolved that the Dean and Chapter request him to appoint a permanent deputy to be approved by the organist, and they are prepared to excuse Mr Shoubridge from personal attendance on his doing so.<sup>15</sup>

The others were good, however; James Barnby, Lockey's current deputy; Kerr Gedge, Lockey's previous deputy, now a supernumerary; and Fred. Walker, the senior supernumerary, who instructed the choristers. The basses were Robert de Lacy, Mattacks<sup>16</sup> and William Winn (a Vicar-Choral, who had conducted the Sunday evening choir and the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy): Mattacks was the weak link, but the other two were capable soloists.<sup>17</sup> It is a fascinating exercise to try to match these ten to the close description of the choir in *The Musical Standard* of 14 January 1871.<sup>18</sup> Not unexpectedly, the assertion by Stainer's biographer that on his arrival 'nearly half the

<sup>13</sup> e.g. Prestige *op. cit.* 160; Paul Chappell, *S. S. Wesley* (Great Woking: McCrimmon, 1977), 65

<sup>14</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 33

<sup>15</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 7 May 1872

<sup>16</sup> His first name cannot be ascertained from the Cathedral records: supernumeraries were not part of the foundation and thus their names were never entered in the Muniment Book.

<sup>17</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 16

<sup>18</sup> v. *supra* Chapter 1, p.2

men were totally inefficient simply from old age'<sup>19</sup> cannot be sustained by the evidence, though it certainly could be a serious problem elsewhere,<sup>20</sup> as the voiceless Lockey was represented by a most capable substitute and of those who were actually singing only Fielding and Shoubridge were seriously inadequate.

The trouble lay rather in the poor attendance of the Vicars-Choral and to a lesser extent the Supernumeraries, and their failure to supply adequate deputies or any at all: a Supernumerary could be fined, but the only penalty for a Vicar-Choral was a slight reduction in his income, as Chapter had no power to fine him. The record of lapses in Stainer's first year tells its own tale: the Succentor complained about the inadequate deputies supplied by Gedge and Winn; Fielding and Francis (altos) were both absent on 20 June and the anthem had to be changed; there were seven lapses in the last week of September, with only four men present on three occasions; in October the Dean agreed to write to Fielding about his poor attendance, and Winn had attended by deputy too many times.<sup>21</sup>

Mercifully, the worst was soon to be over. Fielding withdrew late in 1872, to be represented by another 'permanent deputy' until his death in October 1874 at the early age of forty-four; and Shoubridge died before the end of the year, Stainer taking the vacant place among the Vicars-Choral to the great annoyance of Walker who claimed that he had been promised the next vacancy. Thus by an exquisitely-timed stroke of Providence there now remained only two Vicars-Choral, Francis and Winn, actually singing in the choir, still outside Chapter's control but to become vastly outnumbered after Lady-Day 1873 by new Assistant Vicars-Choral strictly regulated by contract, into whose ranks the Supernumeraries were subsumed. Winn and some of the former Supernumeraries continued to make frequent use of deputies, perhaps because they were older and had already built up singing or teaching connections away from the Cathedral, but they made at least some attempt to keep to the new regulations: Francis pursued single-handed an extraordinary rearguard campaign in defence of the old ways.

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<sup>19</sup> Charlton *op. cit.* 58

<sup>20</sup> v. Chappell *op. cit.* 26 on the situation at Hereford in 1849 where all eight men were either ill or inefficient and two of them never attended at all.

<sup>21</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 8 & 22 June, 28 September, 5 October 1872

The cause of his war may have been the advent of the extra choirmen in 1873, or the agreement to commute the Cupola Fund payments: the occasion was a decision that a list of lapses [in attendance] should be drawn up weekly, signed by the Dean, and placed in the Vicars-Choral's vestry.<sup>22</sup> Francis, who lapsed more than anyone else and would have figured prominently in the list, pulled down the notice on the grounds that the Dean and Chapter had no right to put it up. He was summoned before Chapter and suspended from duty for three months, during which time a deputy would be provided by Chapter at his expense: he objected that he was not the servant of the Dean and Chapter and was not being treated with proper respect, but his suspension was confirmed by a formal act under the Chapter seal.<sup>23</sup> He then consulted his solicitors, who, taking accurate measure of their client, persuaded him to apologise and suggested to Chapter that a suitable offer might induce him to retire. After some haggling over the payment of his deputy he consented to apologise but not to retire,<sup>24</sup> and he was reinstated from the beginning of August, celebrating his return by lapsing eight times in the following two months.<sup>25</sup>

Commenting on a letter in *The Rock*, *The Musical Standard* used the whole episode as yet another stick with which to beat the authorities of St Paul's Cathedral, depicting Francis as the injured innocent:

Recently, the writer adds, the authorities here suspended for three months one of the vicars choral for alleged neglect of duty, insisting, as one of the terms upon which he might resume his stall, that he was to acknowledge their power to mulct him of his salary to any extent they might choose, and also that he should admit his liability to be punished for non-attendance at some extra services. But he being advised by a clever ecclesiastical lawyer, withstood them so successfully that he has resumed the duty long before the conclusion of the three months' suspension, doubtless much to their annoyance, for it is believed he defeated them, not for the first time, on every point urged against him.<sup>26</sup>

This might be from the pages of Barchester, and only served to underline the fact that it was almost impossible to discipline anyone protected by the old statutes: it was fortunate that for all practical purposes only two of the choir now enjoyed this licence,

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* 26 April 1873

<sup>23</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 18 June 1873

<sup>24</sup> *Prestige op. cit.* 161

<sup>25</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 28 September 1873

<sup>26</sup> *The Musical Standard* 16 August 1873, 106

and that no more vacancies occurred until the new and more restrictive statute was about to take effect. Francis appeared to behave rather better for a while, making fewer lapses than usual,<sup>27</sup> but was then absent through illness from 22 December 1873 to the middle of January and failed to supply a deputy at all, the prelude to a return to his old ways. Giving his quarterly summary of attendances in October 1875 the Succentor remarked with some exasperation that ‘the lapses of Mr Francis have been perpetual and excessive,’<sup>28</sup> but deliverance came swiftly and unexpectedly:

The Chapter Clerk reported that in pursuance of the verbal directions given to him at the last Chapter Meeting he had an interview with Mr Francis explaining to him the rumour which had reached the Chapter and informed him that the Dean and Chapter had considered themselves bound to investigate one particular case which the Chapter Clerk named – and that the depositions taken in that case coupled with a certain letter which had reached them left the Dean and Chapter no option but to take steps for removing him from his office unless he resigned.<sup>29</sup>

He resigned with effect from Lady Day 1876 in return for a fixed pension, a most exceptional end to an extraordinary episode since Vicars-Choral normally retained their freehold until death.

Imperfect as the organisation of the choir had been prior to 1873, it provided on a small scale the model for what was to come; a large body of men on Sundays (in future six each of alto, tenor and bass) from whom a proportion (four of each voice) could be drawn on for weekday services. All eighteen attended if the service was followed by a full rehearsal. It having been found impossible to abolish the office of Vicar-Choral with its freehold status, Chapter made the best of a bad lot and treated admission to it as a reward for long service: Supernumeraries (renamed Assistant Vicars-Choral from 1873) were promoted to fill dead men’s shoes, though some unlucky ones reached retiring age before a vacancy arose for a Vicar-Choral’s place, from which of course they could not be compelled to retire.

The Supernumeraries, being as their name implies an addition to the statutory establishment, had been more easily regulated. Rules were agreed by Chapter in 1871 specifying the attendance required, use of deputies, and fines for lateness or non-attendance. These formed the basis of regulations drawn up in July 1872 for the

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<sup>27</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 6 October 1873

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* 16 October 1875

<sup>29</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 7 March 1876

additional Assistant Vicars-Choral, as they were now to be termed: they would be under thirty years of age and serve two years' probation on a salary of £110 p.a. which would rise to £130 on their being confirmed in office; and the existing Supernumeraries would be paid this as well. Appointment would be subject to three months' notice on either side, with retirement at sixty and a pension towards which they would make a contribution of five per cent of their salary: individual arrangements would be made for the existing Supernumeraries. The eight new Assistant Vicars-Choral would be elected by open competition in December to start on the following Lady-Day, 25 March 1873.<sup>30</sup>

It was not a straightforward matter to fill all the new vacancies. Frost<sup>31</sup> relates with some pride that he was first-choice alto: Joseph Stilliard was second, but the third was not appointed. The two new tenors were Alfred Kenningham (St Andrew's, Wells Street) and Henry Guy (Lincoln's Inn Chapel): the three basses were F. H. Horscroft (Salisbury), Thurley Beale (Wells Street) and John Kempton (Cambridge). Already another vacancy had arisen by the death of Shoubridge, so the third-best tenor, Thornton of Oxford, was appointed; and after some hesitation Sidney Barnby, only nineteen years of age, was given the remaining alto place, subject to an additional year's probation on account of his youth. Even so the choir was not complete at Lady-Day, for Henry Guy (tenor) decided that he had too many country engagements and could not always be available for the various occasions (Conversion of St Paul, Ascension, Christmas, and the orchestral services) on which attendance was compulsory, so Raynham the fourth-choice tenor was appointed but could not start until 30 July, when he had served his notice.<sup>32</sup> He also was from Wells Street, and the fact that this church supplied more of the new choir than any other establishment illustrates the high quality of its music under the direction of Joseph Barnby.

Some of the others did not start on the due day, and there was trouble with lapses; Kenningham and Beale were summoned before Chapter in May, the latter pleading illness and various commitments made before his appointment.<sup>33</sup> Chapter displayed a

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* 6 July 1872. Charlton *op. cit.* 59, perhaps unaware of the difference between the Conversion of St Paul and the Feast of the Annunciation, states that they started on 25 January.

<sup>31</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 36ff.

<sup>32</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 6 October 1873

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.* 31 May 1873

firm determination to keep its new employees in order: the standard of attendance was faithfully recorded at meetings of the Weekly Chapter, and the Succentor presented a quarterly summary. The new rules allowed holidays with pay, though these could be forfeited if attendance had been unsatisfactory; and members of the choir could exchange weekday duties or deputise for each other, a distinction being drawn between this and the use of 'strange deputies,' which seems an odd description of the members of a list approved by the Succentor.

The system worked well, though inevitably some slackness crept in as the novelty wore off. There were eleven lapses in a single week of thick fog in December 1873,<sup>34</sup> and at the end of the following quarter the Succentor's general remarks were admonitory in tone:

The services during the Quarter have upon the whole been performed fairly: but the Succentor is sorry to observe a considerable number of lapses, many of them occasioned by illness. There is also a growing disposition to employ strange deputies who cannot be so efficient as the principals; several of the assistants have in this respect exhausted a larger proportion of the 42 days holidays allowed for the whole year than is reasonable for the winter quarter.<sup>35</sup>

It was a theme to which Webber was to return throughout the remainder of his Succentorship, and he also strongly urged Chapter 'to be more strict about the fines, especially for being late, as many of the men justly complain that in a few instances they [the fines] have been contrary to the rules remitted to others.'<sup>36</sup> At least Walker was excused a fine after missing a service through falling down on the cathedral steps,<sup>37</sup> perhaps in the aftermath of unfavourable comment in *The City Press* the previous year, when Canon Gregory had rejected an excuse for lateness with the promise that the man's widow would be fined for his non-attendance were he to fall down dead on his way to a service.<sup>38</sup> 1875 was a much better year, though constant vigilance was maintained, as when it was agreed that the new singing master of the boys (Martin) was to be allowed 'to wear a surplice in the Choir when he thinks it desirable, on condition

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* 13 December 1873

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.* 4 April 1874

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* 28 September 1874

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.* 17 July 1875

<sup>38</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 57; Prestige *op. cit.* 99

he never acts as deputy for any one of the Vicars-Choral or Assistant Vicars-Choral.<sup>39</sup> This was a temptingly easy way for them to avoid going to the trouble of booking proper deputies, and Barrett was reprimanded by Chapter for attempting to do so.<sup>40</sup>

In short, by the time that Webber (and Francis) retired on Lady Day 1876 the men of the choir had been re-organised into a disciplined and reliable body, in which only one active Vicar-Choral (Winn) was now exempt from the new statute. When Fielding died on 10 July 1874 Chapter had cleverly avoided replacing him until after the new statute was confirmed by the Bishop (as Visitor) on 3 November, by insisting that Walker, to whom the place was owed, should first work out the six months' notice he had just been given to relinquish his post as the boys' singing-master;<sup>41</sup> and in consequence he did not start his probationary year until 18 February 1875.<sup>42</sup> It has been too easily assumed that 'the difficulty experienced in securing regularity of attendance from the gentlemen of the choir was only gradually overcome,' and that 'for some time after Stainer's accession the best efforts of Chapter failed to exact punctual and reliable service.'<sup>43</sup> It is more true to say that matters were as chaotic as ever until the early part of 1873, but that the arrival then of a large group of young men, and the fortuitous departure of all but two of the old guard from active duty, brought a new spirit into the choir: Canon Gregory's diaries record a great improvement in the level of attendance from this time.<sup>44</sup> Too much should not be made of the misdemeanours brought before Chapter: many of them concerned one eccentric individual, and by the very nature of the weekly meeting it only tended to be involved when things went wrong.

Mention of Walker brings the narrative neatly to the choristers, who were being trained by him at the time that Stainer took up his duties. Frederick Edward Walker had come into the choir in 1858 as Lockey's deputy: he became Master of the boys in 1867 and was also a Professor of Singing at the Royal Academy of Music, and his obituary

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<sup>39</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 20 March 1875

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* 16 December 1876

<sup>41</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 21 July 1874; the reason given for waiting for the new statute was to get rid of the practice of dividing a Vicar-Choral's income among the others during his probationary year.

<sup>42</sup> List in *Dean & Chapter Muniment Book*

<sup>43</sup> Prestige *op. cit.* 159

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.* 96

praised his 'exceptional ability and modesty.'<sup>45</sup> He was given an additional £50 p.a. for teaching the extra choristers appointed in 1873, perhaps to console him for the loss of the Vicar's place that went to Stainer, but in the summer of the following year George Martin was appointed 'singing Master of the new school as from Christmas next at a salary of £150 p.a. and residence in the house.'<sup>46</sup> (Fielding most obligingly died almost at once, so as previously related Walker at last got his Vicar-Choralship). Martin was appointed because the Dean and Chapter felt that there was a need for a single man who would live in the new school: there is no evidence that Walker was unhappy with the new arrangements, and he continued to have a prominent role as Martin 'was to have nothing to do with the gentlemen, any more than Cooper [sub-organist]. Walker would take [full] rehearsals in the absence of Stainer.'<sup>47</sup>

George Clement Martin, born on 11 September 1844 at Lambourn, Berks., was a private pupil of Stainer at Oxford for composition and organ, taking his Mus. Bac. in 1869. He then became organist of the chapel at Dalkeith Palace, where there was a daily choral service, and of St Peter's Episcopal Church in Edinburgh, but his stay there was short, for in 1874

the invitation came to him from Sir John Stainer to come to London as 'Master of Song' at St Paul's cathedral. This he accepted; thus his first work in London was not as an organist, but to train the St. Paul's boys. However, he occasionally played at the services, and a year later, his chief unfortunately having met with an accident, the Dean and Chapter appointed the 'Master of Song' to be acting organist during Sir John Stainer's enforced absence. A gratifying and well-merited acknowledgement of those services came in a 'Minute' from the Chapter. On the death of George Cooper, in 1876, Dr Martin was appointed sub-organist of the Cathedral.<sup>48</sup>

Only four years Stainer's junior, he was a man of some experience when he came to London, and from his frequent attendance of the services at Magdalen College he had absorbed Stainer's methods, ideals and standards. His exclusion at first from any direction of the choir showed suitable consideration for the feelings of Walker and the sub-organist: Walker continued to take full rehearsals on occasion until October 1876,

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<sup>45</sup> *The Musical Times* 1 January 1914, 41-2

<sup>46</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 27 June 1874

<sup>47</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 60

<sup>48</sup> Obituary, *The Musical Times* 1 April 1916, 189



but by then was so busy with his work at the Royal Academy of Music that he was glad to hand them over to Martin and in fact was excused from having to attend them at all.<sup>49</sup>

Both Walker and Martin in their turn did most of the day-to-day work: they taught the boys their notes and trained their voices, and during the years under discussion their singing gradually improved.<sup>50</sup> There are few references to the boys in the cathedral's records: a complaint about them 'playing about the cathedral';<sup>51</sup> some poor singing in February and March 1873 (coinciding with the arrival of the eleven new boys elected on St Paul's day, who at first would have slowed the pace of rehearsals considerably) and some trouble with refractory individuals.<sup>52</sup> Matters became better ordered once the boys were housed in the new school with their resident singing-master:

Mr Martin's Musical Report upon the qualifications and characters of the choristers was read. It was agreed that the Master of the Choristers [Headmaster] and Mr Martin should be requested to enter this report in a book which might thus become a history of the career of each boy during his connection with the Cathedral. The report [was] generally satisfactory, especially as to the attention and behaviour of the boys.<sup>53</sup>

It had been resolved to find a site for a choir-school as long ago as the beginning of 1871, as the choristers could not be increased in number without larger premises and it was now felt essential to board them.<sup>54</sup> Chapter made unsuccessful attempts to procure sites in Charterhouse Square and Great Knight Rider Street (between St Paul's Churchyard and Great Victoria Street), and then a site in Carter Lane next to the Deanery became available: the Surveyor of the Fabric (Penrose) prepared a design for the new Choir House<sup>55</sup> which was approved in 1872, but there were numerous delays and the foundation-stone was not laid until St Paul's Day 1874, in a snowstorm which soaked the choir's surplices. Not even then did the work proceed smoothly:

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<sup>49</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 64

<sup>50</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 6 October 1873; 3 January, 4 April, 28 September 1874; 16 October 1875; 25 March 1876 (Succentor's quarterly reports)

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.* 19 October 1872

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.* 8 February 1873; also Ch. 1, p.13 *q.v.*

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.* 18 April 1875

<sup>54</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 26 January 1871

<sup>55</sup> The term by which it was known at this time and for many years to come

A fresh annoyance ensued when the walls were actually rising. Chapter had been specifically advised that no claims for loss of light and air could possibly arise from neighbouring owners. But the advisers proved wrong, as experts sometimes do; and claims were suddenly presented which the same experts now stated to be irresistible. So with the house partly built the plans had to be revised in order to reduce the height originally intended, and instead of being ready for occupation by Christmas, as had been hoped, the choristers were not able to move into their new school till early in 1875.<sup>56</sup>

The building still stands, in use by the Youth Hostels Association: among its notable features was a roof-top playground with a cage of wire-netting to protect passers-by from cricket balls and the like.

Minor Canon J. H. Coward had ceased to be Almoner from the beginning of 1873, his house at 1 Amen Corner being taken over by the new Headmaster (the Revd Alfred Barff) as temporary lodging for the twelve<sup>57</sup> new boys to be elected on St Paul's Day: the existing day-boys were given a dinner each day until they could be boarded in the new school,<sup>58</sup> and an ex-chorister, Jefferies, was engaged as a pupil-teacher.<sup>59</sup> Thought was beginning to be given to the boys' education after their voices broke, with a request to the Endowed School Commissioners to take them.<sup>60</sup> Another election for choristers was held in 1874,<sup>61</sup> and others followed annually, for example in 1876 when seven were admitted.<sup>62</sup> Stainer took over No. 1 Amen Corner when Barff and the boys moved out.

There is no shortage of information about the performing standards of the choir before Stainer's arrival,<sup>63</sup> and a sympathetic acknowledgement of the problems awaiting him: 'The choir, as they showed last Sunday afternoon, cannot even sing the Amens with ordinary care and decency, and thus the task lying before the Doctor is no ordinary one.'<sup>64</sup> In strange contrast there is very little to be found in the musical press about the

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<sup>56</sup> Prestige *op. cit.* 130-1

<sup>57</sup> Only eleven were in fact elected; *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 8 March 1873

<sup>58</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 10 February, 26 June, 6 July 1872

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.* 1 March 1873

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.* 23 May 1874

<sup>61</sup> Notice in *The Musical Standard* 13 December 1873, 377

<sup>62</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 29 January 1876

<sup>63</sup> *v. supra* Ch. 1, pp.2-4

<sup>64</sup> *The Choir* 6 January 1872, 3

day-to-day progress of the choir in the years following its enlargement, and Stainer's only comment took what seems a curiously detached view of the situation, when he complained to the Dean about 'the carelessness of the choir in the performing of the Communion Service on Sunday.'<sup>65</sup> It was the innovation of the three special services each year with orchestra and enlarged choir that captured the critics' attention, incidentally furnishing a valuable critique of the choir's best singers; and opinion was overwhelmingly favourable. In his speech to the Leeds Congress Stainer had advocated the performance of oratorio in church, and *The Choir* was happy to find this ideal being put into practice.<sup>66</sup>

There were said to have been about 8,000 in the congregation. The Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis (*S. Elvey in A*) had been orchestrated but were not thought to be worth the bother: the psalm-singing was good, and the not very audible preaching of a sermon was dismissed as a waste of time. The tenor solos were sung by Kerr Gedge and Walker, 'the bass solos being given by Mr Winn with a dignity and pathos which went to the hearts of all hearers.'<sup>67</sup> It ought to be added that another critic thought the canticles and responses ragged, the band and organ not in tune, and the behaviour of the congregation not as good as the papers had reported!<sup>68</sup> The choristers singing the soprano and alto solos were Couldry, Grover and Batten, the first and second of whom are recorded as singing in the 1874 performance of the *St Matthew Passion* along with Hollis and Bradley: Grover and Hollis were the soloists again in the 1875 *St Paul*. Walker was praised for the boys' singing at the 1873 Festival of the Sons of the Clergy, being 'entitled to much credit for the successful way in which the boys sang the soprano solos; the freshness of their voices in the choruses also was particularly striking.'<sup>69</sup> Even if their everyday singing was still unreliable, their best efforts already showed promise of better things to come.

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<sup>65</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 3 January 1874; the music was *Smart in F* and *These are they that follow the Lamb* (Goss).

<sup>66</sup> *The Choir* 1 February 1873, 67

<sup>67</sup> *The Musical Times* 1 February 1873, 754

<sup>68</sup> *The Musical Standard* 8 February 1873, 83-4

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.* 24 May 1873, 322

Winn was Christus and Gedge the Evangelist in the first performance of the *St Matthew Passion*: it was tragic that within three years ill-health compelled the latter to go abroad, where he died in the spring of 1876 aged only thirty-six.<sup>70</sup> Other soloists from within the choir on various occasions were the tenors Kenningham and Thornton and the basses Horscroft, Kempton, De Lacy and Beale: the only bass never used in this capacity was Mattacks, nearing retiring-age, of whose 'inability to take his part in the choir' the Succentor had complained more than once.<sup>71</sup>

The performance of the *St Matthew Passion* now seems quaint in certain aspects. It was preceded by the *Miserere* (Psalm 51) in Stainer's arrangement of the *Tonus Regalis*, which included varied harmonisations of the chant (some highly chromatic) and a sumptuous double-choir *Gloria Patri* (Ex. 3). The chorales were treated as congregational items, the orchestra being bolstered by a trumpet, three clarionets and a heavy organ part: the reporter 'was unable to record any prominent participation by the congregation as an actual result.' The orchestra numbered fifty-four, the choir 350: 'the chords which accompany the narrative voice were pronounced upon a pianoforte by Mr Frederick Walker,'<sup>72</sup> the sub-organist always played the organ, and Stainer conducted except during his leave of absence in 1876. It became the invariable practice for canticle-settings with orchestral accompaniment, often specially composed, to be used on St Paul's day and at the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy: the anthem at the latter in 1873 was Mendelssohn's *Hymn of Praise*, setting a precedent for the use of lengthy and substantial compositions, and the choir was augmented by singers from Eton College, St George's Chapel and the Chapels Royal.<sup>73</sup>

It is good to end on this note of high Victorian optimism. The right structures and people were by now in place to enable the creation of a modern cathedral choir, the battles had been fought and on the whole won, and the time was ripe for a more imaginative use of the human and financial resources with which the cathedral's musical foundation had been equipped. If Stainer did not concern himself with tactics, his address to the Leeds Congress had spelt out a complete artistic and religious strategy

<sup>70</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 15 January 1876; Frost *op. cit.* 64

<sup>71</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 18 October 1873

<sup>72</sup> *The Musical Standard* 11 April 1874, 239

<sup>73</sup> *The Choir* 17 May 1873, 308

**Example 3**

Stainer : Psalm 51, verse 6 & *Gloria Patri*

But lo, thou re - qui - rest . . . truth in the in - ward  
parts, and shall make me to un - der - stand wis - dom se - cret - ly.  
As it was in the be - gin - ning, is now, and e - ver shall be:  
gin - ning, is now, is now, and e - ver shall be:  
now, and . . . e - ver, now, and e - ver shall be:  
As it was in the be - gin - ning, is now, and e - ver shall be:

**1st CHOIR.**  
TREBLE.  
ALTO.  
TENOR.  
BASS.

world with-out end. world with-out end,  
A - men, A men, world with-out

**2nd CHOIR.**  
TREBLE.  
ALTO.  
TENOR.  
BASS.

world with-out end. A - men, A - men, A - men.  
end. A - men, A - men, A - men, A - men.

### CHAPTER 3 : THE FORMATION OF THE NEW CHOIR (1872-6)

for Cathedral Music: the need now was for a Succentor who could put that strategy into practice.

STAINER AND SPARROW SIMPSON,  
A FRUITFUL PARTNERSHIP  
(1876-85)

One of the most serious troubles and difficulties which is met with in cathedrals is the occasional existence of friction or strained relations between succentor and organist. For my part, I can only say that, without Dr. Simpson's help, my work would have been an impossibility. (Sir John Stainer)<sup>1</sup>

William Sparrow Simpson, appointed Minor Canon on 14 January 1861, had exercised considerable influence on the music of St Paul's even before his appointment as Succentor from Lady Day 1876. He had been deeply involved in the plans for re-ordering the cathedral and claimed the credit for placing the organ at the West End of the Choir, divided into two parts, though he would have preferred it to be placed on the Choir Screen, restored to its old position.<sup>2</sup> His first fifteen years' experience of the music of St Paul's had bred in him an impatience with the dullness of much of the choir's repertory but also an intensely practical sense of what would sound effective in the re-ordered building. His views were very similar to those of the Organist of St Paul's, rather more extreme if anything, and both men ventured into print frequently to expound the principles by which they worked; both duly attracted criticism both favourable and adverse. Sparrow Simpson resigned in 1885 and Stainer in 1888, but their partnership set a style for the worship at St Paul's that endured almost unaltered until the Great War and could still be discerned in much more recent times.

When the new Succentor took over his duties the reformed choir was settling down well, and Chapter had fought and won most of its battles in that department: the egregious Mr Francis, the last unreformed Vicar-Choral, had retired on the same day as Succentor Webber,<sup>3</sup> as if to symbolise the end of the old regime. What seemed to be called for was some positive leadership as a counter-balance to the rigid if necessary

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<sup>1</sup> W. J. Sparrow Simpson, *op. cit.* 70

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* 48

<sup>3</sup> *v. sup.* Chapter 3, *passim*

discipline of Canon Gregory, so enthusiastically applied to the choir: fortunately Sparrow Simpson

possessed to a remarkable degree that tact which is, to the smooth working of a corporate body, as necessary as oil to machinery. This special gift showed itself constantly at the weekly rehearsals of the full choir. He always attended them, he himself read the roll-call, checked the attendance, and superintended the general arrangements....While carrying out the unpleasant duty of finding fault with any members of the choir for minor inroads on discipline, he never aroused ire or resentment. On such occasions his manner showed that extreme sensitiveness to the feelings of others, which is the highest proof of gentle blood, and which disarms a man of excuses and wins loyal obedience. Attracted and influenced by Dr Simpson's hard work, amiability, culture, and sense of justice, the members of the musical staff became bound together by a firm resolution to do their very best in their respective spheres.<sup>4</sup>

Coupled with this was a musical taste more adventurous than his predecessor's, and the choir responded willingly. His published reports paid fulsome tribute to the 'earnestness with which the Gentlemen of the Choir, and the Choir Boys themselves, have responded to the heavy demands made upon them,'<sup>5</sup> or tendered

heartfelt thanks...to the Boys, who have with unflagging spirit studied so hard and so well, and who have sung their part with a love for the work and a uniform excellence of conduct and sobriety of demeanour which I have rarely seen equalled; [and] to the Gentlemen of the Choir, who have never once complained to me of the length or difficulty of the Anthems or Services, some very long and very trying, which have been put before them, but have sung with thoroughly artistic feeling and with that hearty love for their noble art which alone makes it possible to render such music adequately,...<sup>6</sup>

or recorded that 'the Gentlemen of the Choir have sung with that excellent artistic taste which distinguishes true lovers of music; and the Boys, in demeanour and assiduity, have left nothing to be desired.'<sup>7</sup>

Such eulogies, though nominally addressed to the Dean and Chapter, were in reality aimed at interested outsiders, to whom Sparrow Simpson sent copies free even of postal charges; if there were occasions for private dissatisfaction, these were infrequent, and the Minutes of the Weekly Chapter are remarkably free of the sort of complaint so common in the preceding years. Such problems as persisted chiefly concerned the use and abuse of the deputy system: *Purcell in B flat* with its extensive and complex 'verses' could not be sung on 27 February 1877 because too many deputies were in the

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<sup>4</sup> W. J. Sparrow Simpson *op. cit.* 72

<sup>5</sup> W. Sparrow Simpson, *Succentor's Report 1877*, 4

<sup>6</sup> *Succentor's Report 1879*, 5

<sup>7</sup> *Succentor's Report 1881*, 7



choir,<sup>8</sup> and Barrett overstayed his leave of absence in 1880 without permission or explanation.<sup>9</sup> In December 1881 both Kenningham and Horscroft were fined for the failure of their deputies, with the warning that ‘a deputy is an indulgence to the members of the Choir; and they are concerned to insist on the regular appearance of their representatives.’<sup>10</sup> Two of the boys were summoned before Chapter for ‘great irreverence during Holy Communion’ but being of previous good character were let off with a warning,<sup>11</sup> and there was a shortfall in numbers causing concern to Stainer and the Chapter in 1881;<sup>12</sup> there is no other mention of the boys.

However, correspondence in the *City Press* gave the Cathedral some very bad publicity in the autumn of 1877, making much of Thurley Beale’s resignation and the enforced retirement of Mr Mattacks on his reaching sixty years of age. The former, according to the Weekly Chapter Minutes, resigned because he was too busy,<sup>13</sup> and it will be remembered that the previous Succentor had complained of the latter’s inadequacy on several occasions,<sup>14</sup> though no action seems to have been taken, perhaps in view of Mattacks’ impending retirement: but all this was meat and drink to the Chapter’s enemies. The introduction of retirement at sixty appeared to be hard on the former Supernumeraries, who had made no provision for this, though the Chapter had made individual arrangements for them when the enlargement of the choir was being planned.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately for Mattacks, though quite understandably in view of his musical shortcomings, he reached the age of sixty without being made a Vicar-Choral and could thus be compelled to retire: being senior to Walker and Barrett who were appointed to vacant Vicar-Choralships in 1875 and 1876 respectively, he might well appear to have a grievance.

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<sup>8</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 3 March 1877

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.* 7 August 1880

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* 17 December 1881

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.* 28 August 1879

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* 14 & 21 May 1879

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.* 19 May 1877

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.* 7 December 1872, 18 October 1873; also v. *supra* Chs. 1, p.12; 3, p.32

<sup>15</sup> *Chapter Minutes*, 6 July 1872

The lengthiest of the letters came from 'An old chorister' and contained both a tribute to Mattacks' loyalty and a somewhat generous estimate of his capabilities:

I, sir, was a boy in that choir for seven years and can testify to the devotion of that gentleman to his duties; I never knew him to be absent at any time when he should be there. When others neglected their duties, he did not; and I have known him to be the only occupant of the men's choir, his grand bass voice filling the place. And now, after his faithful services, he is called upon to retire on the 29<sup>th</sup> of this month, simply because he has attained his 60<sup>th</sup> year....But the worst part of it is that the Dean and Chapter cannot even say he is of no further use to them, as his voice is yet very useful in the services. I suppose that they, having laid down a ridiculous rule, will endeavour to carry it out, but I trust that the press and public opinion will compel them to mete out some reasonable measure of justice to Mr Mattacks.<sup>16</sup>

Subsequent editorial comment continued in similar vein: 'St Paul's is in bad odour....There is quite a chorus of remonstrances against the treatment by the Dean and Chapter of their old servants in the choir, more especially one of them who...is offered the munificent sum of 100*l.* down or the liberal allowance of 20*l.* a year for the remainder of his days to starve upon.'<sup>17</sup> Mattacks was given a farewell presentation of £110 subscribed by the minor canons, choirmen, virgers and other friends, started a music and instrument shop, and two years later was advertising for £1,000 to be invested in his business.<sup>18</sup> The Chapter might well feel that despite criticism from a characteristically unsympathetic journal it had had no option but to enforce its rules: indeed by the standards of the day it was generous in offering any pension at all, when Mattacks was inadequate for the more taxing demands of the reformed choir and might well have been dismissed several years earlier.

The new Succentor's more adventurous musical taste showed itself as soon as he took up his duties. As previously related,<sup>19</sup> there was music by Gounod in the library, obtained on Stainer's and Barnby's recommendation but not yet performed, so this was immediately put into rehearsal. The organist's fortuitous absence<sup>20</sup> gave Sparrow Simpson the chance to obtain and perform two more of Gounod's compositions which even Stainer had refused to include in the original collection, *Daughters of Jerusalem* and *Here by Babylon's wave*, the former because it took twenty minutes to perform and

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<sup>16</sup> *The City Press* 5 September 1877

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* 15 September 1877

<sup>18</sup> *The Times* 11 June 1879

<sup>19</sup> v. *supra.* Ch. 2, p.20

<sup>20</sup> He was recovering from the accident to his eye, described in Ch.1, p.11.

the latter because it was too literal an interpretation of Psalm 137, including such delights as a *bouche fermée* imitation of the wind whistling through the Israelites' harps and a blood-curdling depiction of the Babylonians' children being dashed against a stone. (Examples 4 & 5).

*Here by Babylon's wave* had to wait another year for its first performance, but between 4 April 1876 (the Tuesday following Passion Sunday) and 14 April (Good Friday) there were performances of *All ye who weep* (twice), *As the hart pants* (twice), *Daughters of Jerusalem, O come near to the Cross* and *O day of penitence* (twice). This was quite a feat of rapid note-learning, unless the boys had been given some surreptitious rehearsal before Sparrow Simpson was officially in post.

It may be difficult for the twentieth century to take seriously the late nineteenth's infatuation with Gounod and all his works, but the importance of this little episode is that the new Succentor was immediately putting into effect his policy of introducing music by contemporary or recent composers. Some eighteen months later he wrote to a friend:

The cathedral choir is now in full work, and we are producing a great many compositions new in themselves or new in the Cathedral. I send you a list of the novelties in a few weeks' bills.

Spohr;-'God, Thou art great;' 'The earth is the Lord's;' 'Great is Jehovah.' Schubert in B flat; Schubert in G, Stainer in B flat. Prout;-'Happy is the Man.' Stainer in A. Mendelssohn;-'In His hands' (Ps. xcv), with the newly-discovered chorus, 'For His is the Sea.' Miller in E. Martin in A, 'Whoso dwelleth.' Besides several others. Pretty well for five or six weeks.<sup>21</sup>

The strong representation of Continental composers is to be noted; the cathedral's music was accurately reflecting contemporary artistic taste, and W. S. Gilbert was only partially correct in placing on the Lord High Executioner's list

The imbecile who praises with enthusiastic tone  
All centuries but this and every country but his own,<sup>22</sup>

for while foreign music was indeed fashionable, it was largely the work of contemporary composers, not those of 'all centuries but this.' The only serious exception to this rule was the music of J. S. Bach, but he had as it were been re-invented by Mendelssohn and Barnby and was therefore respectable. In Simpson's last year as

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<sup>21</sup> W. J. Sparrow Simpson *op. cit.* 76-7

<sup>22</sup> *The Mikado* Act 1

**Example 4**  
Gounod : *Here by Babylon's wave*

The musical score is arranged in three systems, each with four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a piano accompaniment consisting of a grand staff (treble and bass clef). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4.

**First System:** The vocal parts enter with the lyrics "Thro' our harps that we hung on the trees, . . . Goes the". The piano accompaniment provides a harmonic foundation with arpeggiated figures.

**Second System:** The vocal parts continue with the lyrics "low wind wea - ri - ly moan - ing ; Min - gles the sad note of the". The piano accompaniment includes a section marked "Harp. ppp" and "Ped." (pedal) with a star symbol.

**Third System:** The vocal parts conclude with the lyrics "breeze, . . . With voice as sad of sigh and groan - ing." The piano accompaniment features a final arpeggiated figure marked "Harp. ppp".

**Performance Instructions:** The score includes several performance markings: *pp* (pianissimo) at the beginning of each vocal entry, *Bouche fermée.* (closed mouth) above the vocal staves during the "Min - gles the sad note of the" phrase, *dim.* (diminuendo) above the vocal staves during the "breeze, . . . With voice as sad of sigh and groan - ing." phrase, and *ppp* (pianississimo) for the harp accompaniment.

### Example 5

Gounod : *Here by Babylon's wave*

[illegible][illegible]

Succentor twenty-seven anthems by Gounod were in use, thirty-one by Spohr and a staggering sixty-seven by Mendelssohn, with excerpts from Brahms' *German Requiem* and Hiller's *Song of Victory* as well. Bach was still somewhat of a novelty, and Simpson introduced large portions of the *Christmas Oratorio*; *Messiah* and other works of Handel continued to be plundered for excerpts, Haydn, Mozart and Schumann were represented, and the *Passion Music* of Karl Graun (1704-57) was also drawn upon. Mendelssohn's *St Paul* continued to be performed at the Patronal Festival, Bach's *St Matthew Passion* on the Tuesday in Holy Week, and a variety of Evening Services, extended anthems and Cantatas at the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy in May or June, all with augmented choir and orchestra. From 1878 Spohr's *Last Judgement* was added to the annual cycle of oratorio and cantata, sung on the second Tuesday of Advent, but by the cathedral choir alone without a conductor and with the orchestral accompaniment brilliantly realised upon the organ by Stainer. All the works of foreign composers were sung in English translation, of course, as were any with a Latin text.

Many Anthems and a few Services had already been discontinued by Simpson's predecessor, for practical as much as aesthetic reasons, and the choir's repertory had become considerably smaller in Webber's last three years.<sup>23</sup> Simpson added much new music in his first year and discarded very little, continuing to enlarge the repertory throughout his tenure of office. Chapter provided generous funds for the acquisition of this large quantity of music, which was stoutly bound into volumes, a practice continued until the second World War: a duplicate set of copies was kept in the choir-school, to avoid the need to carry music to and fro. Much of it would have been sight-read by the men in performance, reliance being placed on the boys' thorough knowledge of their part through daily rehearsal: the sole weekly rehearsal of the full choir was concerned with new or seasonal music, and it must be assumed that the music for men's voices was never rehearsed at all. A large proportion of the choir's music, however, was straightforward, regularly performed and in a familiar idiom: the stable composition and much improved attendance of the choir ensured that most if not all of the men were thoroughly familiar with their everyday work, provided that the rules regarding the employment of deputies were strictly kept. The method of choosing canticle settings in strict rotation was well adapted to these conditions: the ten-week cycle used in

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<sup>23</sup> v. *supra*. Ch. 2, pp.17, 20, 22.

Simpson's first year had grown to a sixteen-week scheme by 1883,<sup>24</sup> but some were sung twice or three times within the sixteen weeks, and those used on Sundays were chiefly drawn from the same list. The overall number was kept under strict control, some being discarded from the earlier schemes: the number of Morning Service settings increased from forty-five in 1877 to fifty-seven in 1881 but fell again to fifty-one in 1885, and the fifty-five settings of the evening Canticles in use in 1877 were augmented to a total of seventy-nine in 1881 before falling back again to seventy-three in 1885.<sup>25</sup> There was almost a doubling of the number of Communion Services from 1881, consequent upon the introduction of a choral celebration on Saints' Days as well as Sundays.

Throughout this period the full choir sang Morning Prayer every day of the week, and Evening Prayer six days out of seven (the seventh being the boys' games afternoon, with the service sung by the men alone), throughout the year, with the boys sent away in two divisions at holiday times. Thus the settings of the morning canticles, by their nature somewhat lengthier, were repeated rather more frequently than those for Evensong, being a smaller number used over a greater number of days. The sixteen week scheme for 1883 still ensured that even the rather plain settings used on Fridays were sung at least three times a year (even if some of the boys might be absent), so that the men knew the basic repertoire well; and the generally long service of the trebles, who remained in the choir until their mid-teens rather than today's thirteen-plus, provided a stability and confidence unknown to the present-day cathedral choirmaster.

A famous acquisition during these years was the 'Willis on wheels,' a small two-manual organ with an ingenious specification which the builders had constructed on their own initiative. It was offered to the cathedral for purchase, and accepted after some hesitation: it was 'resolved that the new Choir organ, although not corresponding to the orders of the Chapter, be paid for, as being a very good instrument.'<sup>26</sup> It proved not to be especially mobile, and eventually found a semi-permanent home in the North

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<sup>24</sup> *Succentor's Reports 1877, 1883*

<sup>25</sup> The present (1998) Organist of St Paul's reckons to use about 50 full-choir Evensong settings each year, though the full choir sings at far fewer services per annum: it was said that Conrad Eden (Durham, 1936-74) tried to get through a whole year without repeating anything.

<sup>26</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 31 December 1881

choir-aisle, where it was blown with wind from the main organ and employed to keep the Celebrant at the High Altar in tune. It eventually proved its worth in the 1920s and during the second World War, when the main organ was out of action.

In his *apologia* for his first year's work,<sup>27</sup> addressed to the Dean and Chapter but obviously directed towards a much wider audience, Sparrow Simpson sought to justify his policy:

The principle upon which the Music Bills have been constructed has been that of pure eclecticism. And this principle, as I conceive, needs no defence. I have yet to learn that any period of Church Music can claim to be regarded as the Augustan Age, or that any date can be fixed of which it may be said to the ecclesiastical musician, "Hitherto thou shalt come, but no further." Whatever is really good in Church music, of whatever age, by whatever composer, I claim as our rightful heritage. To restrict selection to the music of any particular age or country would be as wise an act, as to refuse to employ the railway or the electric telegraph, because they did not exist a century or two ago. Equally unwise would it be for a Succentor to limit himself to the ponderous volumes of Boyce and Arnold, or even to the copious writings of the Anthem composers of the eighteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

In this same year Sir George Elvey, the Organist of St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, circulated a letter to cathedral Deans and Canons calling for greater use of the early repertory in preference to the light secularity of recent works, and these sentiments were endorsed in a note signed by Ouseley, Sullivan (in one of his periodic fits of wishing to be taken seriously), James Turler (Westminster Abbey), E. J. Hopkins (Temple Church), Macfarren (Royal Academy of Music) and others:<sup>29</sup> St Paul's was unashamedly placing itself in the 'modernist' camp rather than the 'true sublime,' or as someone wittily put it, 'Sweet and Low' as opposed to 'High and Dry.'

In fact so far from limiting himself to those 'ponderous volumes' he continued the policy, somewhat surprisingly begun by his predecessor and described in earlier chapters, of studiously ignoring their contents. His next report (two years later, 1879) reminded readers that there were practical as well as aesthetic reasons for this: since the re-ordering of the Cathedral, he explained, 'what may be called Chamber Anthems, Anthems dependent for their effect almost entirely upon alto solos, or long verses for Alto, Tenor, and Bass, are now scarcely admissible as they are almost entirely

<sup>27</sup> *Report of the Succentor to the Dean & Chapter of S. Paul's Cathedral, 1877*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* 5

<sup>29</sup> Gatens *op. cit.* 64; *q. v.*, Chs.1-4, for a discussion of the opposing schools of thought.



ineffective.’<sup>30</sup> Appendix 10 shows the extent to which such anthems had been discarded from the repertory.

He must have felt that he had made his point adequately by now, and later Reports merely state his continuance of the policy, but in fact the eclecticism of which he boasted was impaired and limited by his dislike of contrapuntal music, as exemplified by his neglect of such fine and useful pieces as *Bow thine ear* (Byrd) and *Almighty and everlasting God* (Gibbons). His views found quaint expression in 1881, for in expressing a wish for ‘short and yet grand settings’ of the Holy Communion for use on weekdays, he allowed his feelings free rein:

Adaptations from foreign sources will not long hold their ground when English writers of the highest rank will supply, as some have already done, music worthy of the place and of the time. Mere grammatical exercises, like Creyghton’s Service in *E flat*, which might be adapted to the multiplication table quite as fitly as to the Creed, cannot satisfy those who have listened with hearing ears to such services as Garrett in D, or Stainer in A, or Wesley in E. The *Creeds* of such services are admirable. *Ars est celare artem*. The hearer is not called away from the grand words by some mere artifices or parrot-like *imitation*, but the words and music blend together into one grand whole, the heart is lifted nearer to heaven. Who can be the better for hearing Creyghton in *E flat*?<sup>31</sup>

It may well be thought amusing that he should vent such spleen on this feeble service by Robert Creyghton, an amateur musician who was a Canon of Wells from 1674 to 1734 and Professor of Greek at Cambridge,<sup>32</sup> especially as the work had long ceased to be sung at St Paul’s; but contemporary reviewers were not amused. *The Artist* pointed out that by attacking *Creyghton in E flat* he attacked a whole school of composition including Palestrina, and urged him rather to ‘study, with a view to reform, that feeble monstrosity the modern cathedral chant and the barbarous treatment of sacred language which is involved in its use, and by the contrivance called “pointing”,’<sup>33</sup> a striking foretaste of sentiments common a century later.

The death in 1886 of the absentee Precentor, the Revd Charles Almeric Belli, the duties of whose office had by long-standing custom been delegated to the Succentor of the day, inspired some speculative correspondence as to the best candidate for the vacant position; Stainer, one or other of the Vicars-Choral, or Sparrow Simpson who

<sup>30</sup> *Second Report of the Succentor*, 1879, 4

<sup>31</sup> *Third Report of the Succentor*, 1881, 4

<sup>32</sup> Fellowes, *op. cit.* 176

<sup>33</sup> *The Artist* 1 July 1881

had only recently retired from the office of Succentor. If such fanciful suggestions are to be ignored, the various letters nevertheless contain a striking unanimity as to the deficiencies of the policy then being followed in the choice of the Cathedral's music and the following is a good example of the views expressed:

Some of your readers may be surprised to learn what is taking place with regard to the selection of the music now performed. The service music of the great masters of our English Church Music is but rarely heard within the walls of our most important Cathedral. Purcell, Blow, Croft, Gibbons, Green [*sic*], Attwood and Sir John Goss are all but ignored. In place of it we get compositions by sundry lady composers who are connections of distinguished members of the Cathedral clerical staff, and an amateur, who happens to be, or was, in Parliament.<sup>34</sup>

Another correspondent wrote of the 'undue preference given to modern and altogether unknown compositions,'<sup>35</sup> and a third complained of the want of variety in the drawing up of the "schemes" and that it was 'mirthful' to notice Anthems and Services on the list, the composers of which were known to be Miss G, Miss C, or (another) Miss G, when such services as Attwood in C and others of that character would be welcomed by those attending the Cathedral. Greene, Purcell, Boyce, Corfe, Wise and Blow were persistently ignored. It was admitted that the boys sang well, though seeming to strain their voices through the excessive use of modern music, but of the men only the basses were unreservedly commended.<sup>36</sup>

This was all written over a year after Simpson's retirement, but his successor was following the same policy, and he himself had introduced the anthems and services (listed in Appendices 7-10) by Miss Eleanor Gregory (the Canon's daughter) and W. H. Gladstone (the M. P.): Dean Church's daughter Helen's initials H. B. C. appeared in the lists as the composer of a set of chants for the *Benedicite*,<sup>37</sup> but the 'other Miss G' eludes detection. The 'old school' was continuing to find things at St Paul's not at all to its liking, and there seemed some substance in the charge that the choice of music was not as wide-ranging as it purported to be.

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<sup>34</sup> *The Musical Standard* 16 January 1886, 42

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.* 23 January 1886, 60

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* 30 January 1886, 75

<sup>37</sup> Novello, *Parish Choir Book* No. 423. See also 'St Paul's Cathedral from 1931, continued,' *Musical Opinion*, April 1930, 624, though this incorrectly states that the chants were for the *Benedictus*.

Long after they had both retired, Stainer wrote a closely-argued and extensive defence of his old colleague:

Dr. Simpson's views on cathedral music were both broad and eclectic. By broad, I mean that he did not pledge himself to introduce any special school of music to the exclusion of other schools; by eclectic, I mean that if any composition or work was in his belief capable of edifying worshippers, he adopted it, regardless of any suggestions thrown out by outsiders that the composer did not perhaps belong to the first rank....I am quite aware that some of the older type of succentors or precentors considered that Dr. Simpson was too modern in his tastes, and that the so-called severe style of church music was neglected by him. I have heard him blamed for using so often the music of Mendelssohn, Gounod, and Ferdinand Hiller. But I think he had good reasons for his choice. If it be attempted to supply a cycle of appropriate anthems and canticles from the works of our early English composers, it will be at once found that their number is exceedingly limited, and also, that of that number many are ill-adapted to the present conditions of cathedral worship....He fully realized the fact, now so often overlooked, that a large portion...of the music of our English writers for nearly two centuries was practically chamber music....Once throw open a building some hundreds of feet in length, with a huge area like that of the dome of St. Paul's, and such music can only be sparingly, if ever, used. But Dr. Simpson had one desire and purpose from which he never wavered, namely, to encourage living composers to write Church music...and, as far as he possibly could, he gave every promising composition a trial in St. Paul's. He argued very properly that, if some of it proved more or less a failure, young composers would at least have an opportunity of finding the cause of their failure and avoiding it in future. But in estimating the merit of modern music, Dr. Simpson took up a position which called up considerable adverse feeling in certain quarters. He could not tolerate imitations: he held that a modern composer should write up to date;...This attitude of Dr. Simpson towards highly respectable sham old music caused him to exclude from the Cathedral lists nearly all the compositions of several comparatively recent writers who have borrowed old moulds wherein to cast their thoughts and then have posed as reformers.<sup>38</sup>

The composers stigmatized by Stainer must surely include Ouseley, only three of whose anthems remained in use after 1875, though he owed him much personal gratitude and forebore to mention him by name. Ouseley, a composer without formal training but an antiquarian and the collector of a noted library of the works of the ancient composers, left several essays in the 'sham-antique' style: *Is it nothing to you?* has the necessary modal feel, imparted by the Phrygian cadence and its attendant cadential suspension in the very first line (Ex. 6) and a concluding cadence on the dominant, and an attempt at rhythmic freedom in the cross-rhythms at 'Behold and see' (Ex. 7); but the work is entirely homophonic, with too many cadences, and some quite non-stylistic unprepared sevenths (Ex. 8), the overall effect being self-conscious with a lingering feel of the part-song

It must be added in Ouseley's defence that he could write much better music; *From the rising of the sun*, which Simpson continued to use, is a clean, solid, straightforward piece which Goss could well have written, and *O Saviour of the world* uses the classic double-choir layout in a thoroughly up-to-date way, even if the suspensions at 'Save us

<sup>38</sup> W. J. Sparrow Simpson *op. cit.* 67ff.

Example 6  
Ouseley: *Is it nothing to you ?*

Is it no-thing to you, all ye that pass

Is it no-thing to you, all ye that pass

Is it no-thing to you, all ye that pass

Is it no-thing to you, all ye that pass

by?

by?

by?

by?

by?

Detailed description: This musical score is for a four-part setting of the hymn 'Is it nothing to you?'. It features four staves, each with a vocal line. The lyrics are 'Is it no-thing to you, all ye that pass' repeated on each staff. The first staff begins with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking. The second staff has a *pp* marking, the third a *pp* marking, and the fourth a *pp* marking. The melody is simple and homophonic, with a long note on 'pass' in each part. Below the main score, there are four additional staves, each with a single note and the word 'by?' underneath, likely indicating a 'by' part or a specific vocal entry.

Example 7  
Ouseley: *Is it nothing to you ?*

Be-hold and see, Be-hold,— and see,

Be-hold and see, Be-hold,— and see,

Be-hold and see, Be-hold,— and see,

Be-hold and see, Be-hold,— and see,

Detailed description: This musical score is for a four-part setting of the hymn 'Is it nothing to you?'. It features four staves, each with a vocal line. The lyrics are 'Be-hold and see, Be-hold,— and see,' repeated on each staff. The first staff begins with a *mf* (mezzo-forte) dynamic marking, followed by a *p* (piano) marking. The second staff has a *mf* marking followed by a *p* marking. The third staff has a *mf* marking followed by a *p* marking. The fourth staff has a *mf* marking followed by a *p* marking. The melody is simple and homophonic, with a long note on 'see' in each part.

Example 8  
Ouseley: *Is it nothing to you ?*

First system of the musical score. It consists of four staves. The top three staves are vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor) and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "sor - row, like un - to my sor - row,". The music features a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. There are various musical notations including slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like *pp* and *mp*.

Second system of the musical score. It consists of four staves. The lyrics are: "which is done un - to me, which is done un - to me, where-with the". The music continues with the same instrumental and vocal parts. Dynamic markings *pp* and *mp* are present. The notation includes slurs and ties across the staves.

Third system of the musical score. It consists of four staves. The lyrics are: "Lord hath af - flict - ed me in the day of his fierce an - ger." The music concludes this system with a final cadence. The notation includes slurs and ties, and the key signature remains one flat.

and help us,' reminiscent of Lotti's *Crucifixus*, are yet more evidence for a suspicion that Ouseley had spent so long with ancient music that he could adopt any style except his own. (Ex. 9). It is surprising that this splendid piece was not sung at St Paul's, but the cause may well have been the lack of an octavo edition, not remedied by Novello until 1933; Simpson, an enthusiast for the octavo vocal score, only rarely bought folio or single-part editions for the choir.

S. S. Wesley must be another candidate. He 'posed as a reformer' and Stainer had no high opinion of him;<sup>39</sup> his anthems were sung regularly rather than frequently, and the anthem *Cast me not away from thy presence* and the short Service in F, both rather archaic in style, also were dropped from the repertory after 1875. The latter seems to hark back to the eighteenth-century world of Kelway, King, Nares and Travers, with some particularly infelicitous word-setting (Ex. 10), whilst the former is given high praise by Arthur Hutchings for those very qualities which had little appeal for Simpson:

He [Wesley] has left only one flawless piece, *Cast me not away*, and it is flawless because it is short enough to be conceived as a whole. This word-setting and vocal texture is not inferior to some of the best work of Byrd or Morley.<sup>40</sup>

If one compares it with Ouseley's *Is it nothing to you?* there is again the tinge of modality, with another Phrygian cadence at the conclusion, but in complete contrast there is a proper alternation of homophony and polyphony, with masterly handling of the dissonances created by the imitative writing at 'Restore unto me' (Ex. 11), though a similar texture at 'Make me to hear of joy and gladness' is less inspired, and a striking piece of scoring, largely over a dominant pedal, to illustrate the word 'rejoice' (Ex. 12). It is also noteworthy that in only thirty-five of the eighty-two bars are all six voices used together. If not quite meriting Hutchings' description of it as flawless, it is still a distinctive and moving anthem: the archaisms are more than counterbalanced by authentic Wesley, and its exclusion from St Paul's from 1875 until 1907 seems inexplicable. However, the Novello octavo edition is numbered 975, betokening publication in 1909 or 1910, so perhaps it was merely another casualty of Simpson's policy of buying only octavo editions.

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<sup>39</sup> Charlton *op. cit.* 35f.

<sup>40</sup> Arthur Hutchings, *Church Music in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Jenkins, 1967) 103



**Example 10**  
S. S. Wesley : Evening Service in F

**CAN.**

And His mer - cy is on them that fear Him: through-

And His mer - cy is on them that fear Him: through-

**CAN.**

And His mer - cy is on them that fear Him: through.

And His mer - cy is on them that fear Him: through-

**CAN.**

**DEO.**

- out all ge - ne - ra - tions. He hath shew - ed strength with His

- out all ge - ne - ra - tions. He hath shew - ed strength with His

**DEO.**

- out all ge - ne - ra - tions. He hath shew - ed strength with His

- out all ge - ne - ra - tions. He hath shew - ed strength with His

**DEO.**

arm: He hath scat - ter - ed the proud in the i - ma - gi - na - tion of their hearts.

arm: He hath scat - ter - ed the proud in the i - ma - gi - na - tion of their hearts

arm: He hath scat - ter - ed the proud in the i - ma - gi - na - tion of their hearts.

arm: He hath scat - ter - ed the proud in the i - ma - gi - na - tion of their hearts.





Example 12  
S. S. Wesley : *Cast me not away from thy presence*

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has six staves, and the second system has seven staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes various musical markings such as *cres.* (crescendo), *mf* (mezzo-forte), *rall.* (rallentando), and *p* (piano). The lyrics are written below the vocal staves.

**System 1:**

- Staff 1 (Vocal): *cres.* may re-joice, *cres.* may re-joice, *mf*
- Staff 2 (Vocal): may re-joice, *cres.* may re-joice
- Staff 3 (Vocal): may re-joice, *mf*
- Staff 4 (Vocal): may re-joice, *cres.* may re-joice, *mf* that the
- Staff 5 (Vocal): may re-joice, *cres.* may re-joice, *mf* may
- Staff 6 (Piano): *cres.* may re-joice, *mf*

**System 2:**

- Staff 7 (Vocal): *mf* may re-joice, *rall.* re-joice.
- Staff 8 (Vocal): may, *mf* may re-joice, *rall.* re-joice.
- Staff 9 (Vocal): may re-joice, *rall.* re-joice.
- Staff 10 (Vocal): bones which Thou hast broken may re-joice, *rall.* re-joice.
- Staff 11 (Vocal): re-joice, *rall.* may re-joice.
- Staff 12 (Vocal): re-joice, may re-joice.
- Staff 13 (Piano): *rall.* *p*

Simpson's enthusiasm for foreign composers has already been noted. Which British composers met with his approval? One may discount the amateur or student efforts which were given a trial and then discarded; and even some of Stainer's anthems did not obtain a permanent place, though in general his music and that of the cathedral's other composer-organists Attwood and Goss was well represented. The sub-organist George Martin was beginning to compose on a modest scale, and his anthems and services were added to the repertory as they appeared. Joseph Barnby's anthems were in frequent use, though some earlier and rather academic efforts had been dropped: excerpts from Sterndale Bennett's *The Woman of Samaria* were to be found, as were the works of J. Baptiste Calkin, William Crotch, George Elvey and Henry Smart, with a limited representation of Charles Steggall and Thomas Attwood Walmisley. The works of Arthur Sullivan were as favoured as those of Gounod, and excerpts from *The Prodigal Son* and *The Light of the World* began to appear from about 1880. Above all, the repertory was kept up-to-date: Stanford's complete Service in B flat and Evening Service in A<sup>41</sup> are listed in the 1881 report, and the anthem *Awake, my heart* in that for 1883. More puzzling is the case of Parry's second Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in D<sup>42</sup> later known as the 'Great Service,' which was performed but twice, on 19 February and 2 July 1882, and then abandoned: the reason may be that, being unpublished and in single manuscript parts, this somewhat diffuse piece was rather unsafe in performance by a choir now used to singing almost exclusively from full octavo printed vocal scores.

How had Simpson formed his musical preferences? They accord so strongly with Stainer's, expressed at the Church Congress of 1872 at Leeds and subsequently published in full,<sup>43</sup> that it is reasonable to assume that one man influenced the other; and Simpson exhibited so much of the zeal of the convert that it is pardonable to deduce that it was Stainer who implanted the ideas. Stainer's lecture on *The Principles on which Music should be Selected for Use in Cathedrals* was a lengthy working-out of the premise that churchmen should strive to keep the standard of Church music at least as high as that of secular music, so as to extend the influence of the Church as against that of the world.

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<sup>41</sup> Commissioned by Stainer for the 1880 Festival of the Sons of the Clergy

<sup>42</sup> pub. Stainer & Bell (ed. Jeremy Dibble) 1984

<sup>43</sup> *The Choir* 26 October 1872, 257-8

Cathedral musicians, said Stainer, were apt to become admirers of only one style of music: the majority of cathedrals chose their music on a bad principle or none at all, either adopting the new at the expense of the old, or more commonly repeating the old favourites, nine out of ten of which were very poor specimens. The principle should be to use the best of all styles, and the only test was that church music should edify; it should have religious value as well as artistic merit.

Music could be arranged into four classes; simple harmonic, contrapuntal, dramatic, and composite. The *simple harmonic* was of two kinds: either the harmonic progression was of more importance than the melody, or the melody was all-important and supported by simple harmonies. The first style was the older, for our musical forefathers wrote their bass part first, with such fine effects as in Farrant's *Hide not thou thy face*, Croft's *Burial Service* and Palestrina's *O bone Jesu*; examples of the second kind were *Come Holy Ghost* (Attwood) and *O Lord my God* (Wesley). Gregorian chant could also be assigned to this class, and should be heard more frequently in cathedrals: it was a pity that the zeal of the 'Gregorianizers,' who would admit no other kind of music if they had their way, had aroused such prejudice against it.

The second class, the *contrapuntal* style, had rare merits but serious defects. At its best it could constantly stimulate the attention of hearers and almost command attention to the words, giving at the same time a sense of satisfaction by its completeness and massiveness; at its worst it drew attention from the words to a contemplation of the author's skill. Even Orlando Gibbons (Ex. 13) was guilty of this at times, said Stainer:

In his Nicene Creed in F, at the words ("And was crucified also for us," "He suffered and was buried"); words so solemn, so affecting, that many a knee on hearing them sinks in adoration, he has a musical theme of a trivial, almost of a playful character. Can any better proof of the utter disregard of the words, in which contrapuntists indulge, be brought before you than this?...It has been said that some of the pages of Handel, in which he depicted in sweet sounds scenes of the Passion, were found stained with his tears. Do you suppose that the mere contrapuntist is moved to tears while writing? Nothing of the sort; the only anxiety you can trace on his face arises from his fears whether he can make his subject of so many bars stand on its head, which he calls *inversion*; or whether he can stretch it out to twice its length, which he calls *augmentation*; or whether he can squeeze it into half its compass, which he calls *diminution*; whether worshippers will be *edified* or not by his music is none of his business; it is enough for him if it is ingenious....Such services – which are a parody on fine music, and which mar some of our finest canticles, as the *Te Deum* and *Magnificat* – I trust will some day be for ever exiled from our cathedrals.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *The Choir* 26 October 1872, 257

**Example 13**  
Gibbons : Communion Service in F (*Credo*)

And was in-carnate by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Ma - - - ry And -  
- carnate by the Ho - ly Ghost, of the Vir - gin Ma - ry And was made -  
And was in - car - nate by the Holy Ghost, of the Vir - gin Mary And was  
was in - carnate by the Ho - ly Ghost, of the Virgin Ma - ry And was  
was made man. And was cru-ci-fied al - so for us un-der  
man. And was cru-ci-fied al - so for us un-der  
made man. And was cru-ci-fied al - so for us un-der  
made man. And was cru-ci-fied al - so for us un-der  
Pon-tius Pl - late. He suf-fer-ed and was bu - ri - ed. And the  
Pon-tius Pl - late. He suf-fer-ed and was bu - ri - ed. And the third day  
Pon-tius Pl - late. He suf-fer-ed and was bu - ri - ed. And the third day  
Pon-tius Pl - late. He suf-fer-ed and was bu - ri - ed. And the

He praised some anthems in this style, where the composer had only a short text to set and could make the words more impressive, such as *If ye love me* (Tallis), *God is gone up* (Croft), *Hosanna* (Gibbons), *O God thou hast cast us out* (Purcell) and *My God, my God* (Blow), which could not be surpassed for mixed beauty and grandeur.

The *dramatic* style, chiefly aimed at by modern composers, had been attempted by various composers from Purcell and Humfrey to the present day. When skilfully handled it could perpetually lead the listener into a train of thought most suitable to the words, but all too often led to a straining after effect and a lack of repose, a fault particularly obvious in canticle settings.

There was a noble store of music in a *mixed* style, part simple, part dramatic, such as "O God, thou art my God," Purcell; "By the waters of Babylon," Boyce; "O where shall wisdom be found," Boyce; "The Wilderness," Wesley; and later still "We have heard with our ears" by Arthur Sullivan, founded on a Gregorian tone but modern in style. Mendelssohn had written in all styles, and his compositions had exercised an influence over society little short of miraculous: all his sacred works could safely be drawn on for use as anthems in church.

Finally Stainer pleaded for an acceptance of arrangements from Oratorio, and for performances of oratorio, passion music and cantata with their proper orchestral accompaniments. There should be music in all styles: the Church should

be able to say to the lover of Anglican music, Come to our cathedral on such and such days; to the lover of Gregorian music, come on such other days; to those who can devoutly worship when listening to an oratorio, (and who can not?) come at such times; to those who love congregational singing, come on Sundays; and hear our roof echo again and again to the uplift voice of the hearty congregation.

Thus I should like it to be shown by our cathedral authorities, that no partial musical education, no party spirit, no allegiance to any special school of music, dictates the selection used.<sup>45</sup>

The new organist of St Paul's was setting out plainly his vision for the whole of the cathedral's music, and by the summer of the following year (1873) the re-established Sunday evening service was providing 'the uplift voice of the hearty congregation,' passion music and oratorio (on St Paul's day and at the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy) were performed with orchestral accompaniment, and even Gregorian chant could be heard in Stainer's arrangement of the *Miserere* (Psalm 51). All of these were Stainer's personal responsibility: it was providential that the music of the statutory services, the one area beyond his official control, soon came under the jurisdiction of a

Succentor so sympathetic to Stainer's prescription for the choice and style of cathedral music, and that the cathedral's large modern choir would henceforth be employed in an imaginative and up-to-date fashion.

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<sup>45</sup> *The Choir* 26 October 1872, 258

## THE REFORMERS' SUCCESSORS (1886-1911)

When Sir John Stainer resigned the organistship of St. Paul's in 1888 it was in the natural order of things that Dr. Martin – who received his doctor's degree from the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1883 – should succeed to this important and responsible post. To succeed so eminent, so genial and so greatly beloved a man as Sir John Stainer needed some courage; but, as all the world knows, Dr. Martin has discharged his duties with conspicuous ability, deserving of the highest praise.<sup>1</sup>

Sparrow Simpson retired in 1885 and Stainer in 1888, and both men's successors were appointed from within the cathedral's existing staff: the Victorian Dean and Chapter of St Paul's saw nothing untoward in appointing men whom they already knew, and who could be trusted to share their vision and continue the reforms so recently and painfully carried out. Martin had in any case done the lion's share of the work in training the choir, and 'as the skilful and successful trainer of the boys in their singing, he had already acquired a considerable reputation;'<sup>2</sup> for apart from taking the weekly rehearsal of the full choir Stainer had continued the tradition existing at the time of his appointment, that the Organist did no more than the organ-playing implied by the title of his office.<sup>3</sup> At some cathedrals the organist also trained the boys, but at many their training was delegated to a schoolmaster or lay-clerk; and even at the end of the century it was not unknown for the Precentor or Succentor still to take such full rehearsals as occurred, with the organist (if present at all) relegated to the role of rehearsal accompanist.<sup>4</sup>

Barrett states that 'Martin took an important part in the music at St Paul's under Stainer's direction, and was in many ways the first modern assistant cathedral organist.'<sup>5</sup> This statement requires so much qualification as to be almost meaningless:

<sup>1</sup> *The Musical Times* July 1897, 442 (Editorial)

<sup>2</sup> William Russell, *St Paul's under Dean Church and his associates* (London: Griffiths, 1922), 86

<sup>3</sup> Stainer's direction of the Sunday Evening Choir and the orchestral services was, as it were, an optional extra.

<sup>4</sup> Barrett *op. cit.* 92, & Ch. 8 *passim*

<sup>5</sup> Barrett *op. cit.* 172



the modern assistant is essentially the skilled accompanist of a choir directed by the titular organist, and has only a limited share in the training whether of the choristers or the full choir. The only occasions on which Martin played under Stainer's direction were the big festival services with orchestra and augmented choir: at all other times the cathedral choir was not conducted and the organist (either Stainer or Martin) stayed in the loft, a custom hallowed by tradition and even now not entirely extinct. It is arguable that as Stainer's assistant Martin enjoyed a status greater than many a late twentieth-century assistant, for he had the sole training of the boys and directed the service music from the organ on at least three days per week.

When Martin succeeded Stainer he continued, by his own request, to be responsible for the boys' training, and thus as cathedral organist he took over a large part of the work which he had previously done as music master in the choir school: some assistance in his duties there was now to be provided by Assistant Vicars-Choral, first Frost and subsequently Charles Tinney, with Frost then continuing to teach piano to the choristers. Thus it is more correct to describe him as the prototype of the modern cathedral *organist* (not *assistant organist*), for he worked in a way which was the norm until very recently, with almost sole responsibility for training a choir which he habitually accompanied: John Dykes Bower at St Paul's, Conrad Eden at Durham and even David Willcocks at King's College, Cambridge were carrying out their duties in much the same way as recently as the late 1960s, the only difference being that in the meantime the responsibility for choosing music had passed from clergy to organist.

The same writer also refers to a published account of a boys' practice 'during Stainer's time at St Paul's,' from which one might reasonably infer that Stainer himself took the practice. For some reason Barrett withholds the information that the practice was taken by Martin, as was usual: the account is of such exceptional interest as to merit quotation *in extenso*. It was noted that Martin kept perfect discipline: the practice began with slow scales on 'Ah,' of which the writer observed that 'The tone emitted by these 40 picked boys is tremendously shrill. But, with all its shrillness, there is none of the clatter of the forced "chest" register so common with untrained boys. It is loud singing, but not shouting.' (This could easily be a description of the present-day sound of the choir, so perhaps Martin reached much the same conclusion as Barry Rose and John

Scott,<sup>6</sup> as to the kind of treble tone which is effective in the building). There were then agility exercises, and questions on theory, in which one boy wrote answers on the board for the others to correct. Four canticles and two anthems (presumably that day's ration) were practised: so good was the boys' reading that a new piece was seldom tried more than three times before being sung in the cathedral. Psalms and hymns hardly ever needed rehearsal.<sup>7</sup>

Martin's first assistant-organist was one of Stainer's pupils, William Hodge, who continued to be organist of St Marylebone Parish Church after his appointment to St Paul's: copies of *The Crucifixion*, written for the Marylebone choir and dedicated to Hodge, still bear his name in the familiar Novello edition. He died in July 1895,<sup>8</sup> and was succeeded by Charles Macpherson, a former chorister, who undertook the dual role of sub-organist and music master at an annual salary of £200, taking over the duties carried out by Tinney and Frost. The resulting reduction in the staff of Assistant Masters was deprecated by the Headmaster.<sup>9</sup> As Martin grew older, Macpherson relieved him of an increasing share of the choristers' training: he was rewarded by an increase in salary of £50 p.a. and a house in Amen Court,<sup>10</sup> and the 1907 Succentor's Report congratulates him on his 'excellent work...in training the choristers.' John Ireland's anthem *Greater love hath no man* (1912) bears a dedication to Macpherson and the St Paul's Choristers.

Martin died 'in harness' on 23 February 1916, though his health had been poor for some time and he had thought of resigning about three years previously. His last public appearance had been to conduct the orchestra at the morning service on St Paul's Day, 25 January, and the strain of this undoubtedly hastened his end. The *Musical Times* of April 1916 contained tributes from Macpherson, Mackenzie, J. F. Bridge (Westminster Abbey), Harding (Royal College of Organists) and Alcock (Chapel Royal), together with the complete text of a sermon preached in St Paul's on the Sunday following his death: these chronicle his efficiency in his duties at the cathedral, including his personal

<sup>6</sup> Barry Rose, Master of the Choir 1974-85; John Scott, Assistant Organist 1985-90, Organist since 1990.

<sup>7</sup> *The Guardian*, 2 April 1884, quoting *The Nonconformist*

<sup>8</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 20 July 1895

<sup>9</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 8 November 1995

<sup>10</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 14 December 1907, 24 July 1909

scrutiny of the band parts for the major orchestral services; his love of the countryside and country sports; his humour and practical jokes; and his sensitive and deeply religious nature. Though not a prolific composer, he 'enriched the musical repertoire of the church with many expressive anthems and services which show command of modern harmonic idioms and display melodic power.'<sup>11</sup>

The obituary tributes contain testimony to his *rapprochement* with the choirboys, whether in encouraging youthful composers or practising cricket on the choir-school roof: a famous photograph of the latter still exists. Sir Edward Bairstow recorded his influence in the Royal College of Organists as one of the 'big three,' the other two being Bridge of Westminster Abbey and Parratt of St George's, Windsor; he also recalled an incident with a 'whoopie-cushion':

There was a circular india-rubber contraption which when sat upon gave forth a high squeak. Sir George Martin was so pleased with it that he took it away, putting it in the tail pocket of his morning coat. He was a most benevolent looking old gentleman with a beard. He went back home on the Underground with two old ladies who were much confounded when Sir George sat down on the squeaker.<sup>12</sup>

The *Musical Times* editorial went so far as to say that

His skill as a church choir trainer was unique. The primer he wrote on 'The Art of Training Choir Boys' is a standard work on the subject. In his last days, when he may have reflected on his life's work, it must have been a source of deep satisfaction to him to know that he had maintained the world-wide reputation of St Paul's Cathedral services as it was left to him by Sir John Stainer, his predecessor, and that he was able to bequeath so rich a heritage to his successor.<sup>13</sup>

Posterity has not been kind to Sir George Martin (he was knighted for his part in the Silver Jubilee thanksgiving of 1897). His music has suffered complete disuse apart from some chants and the hymn-tune *St Helen*, usually sung to 'Lord enthroned in heavenly splendour;' if the judgement that 'his style was much influenced by Spohr and Gounod, and the sentimentality of his music has been fatal to its survival'<sup>14</sup> errs in judging it by the criteria of a later generation obsessed with the Tudor revival, one cannot easily quarrel with it, except perhaps to suggest that there is also a Victorian

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<sup>11</sup> *The Musical Times* 1 April 1916, 185 (Editorial)

<sup>12</sup> Francis Jackson *Blessed City* (York: Sessions, 1996), 82

<sup>13</sup> *The Musical Times*, loc. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Fellowes *op. cit.* 235

gusto (or, if you prefer, vulgarity) which the taste of a succeeding and more sensitive generation found unacceptable. The end of *Hail, gladdening light* is a perfect illustration of this, as is the conclusion of *Gloria in excelsis* (Examples 14, 15). In almost total contrast is his sensitive setting of *Veni Sancte Spiritus* (later issued with an English translation *Holy Spirit, come, O come*) for the meeting of Convocation on 30 April 1880. If not devoid of excess at moments of climax, it mainly exhibits a becoming restraint: Example 16 admirably illustrates both qualities. Nor should one overlook his industry in editing and adapting Allegri's *Miserere*, or *Aeterna Christi munera* and other Masses of Palestrina: furthermore his edition of Battishill's *O Lord, look down from heaven* was the standard one for many years, and he published *Gibbons in F* transposed up a tone<sup>15</sup> years before Fellowes issued his version in A flat in the Tudor Church Music series.<sup>16</sup> It is arguable that it is easier to sing in Martin's pitch than in the minor third upward transposition so universally and uncritically applied to this sort of music.

Whatever Martin's limitations as a composer, it was totally inexcusable for it to be said that 'after Stainer's sixteen years of reform any period immediately following must seem tame, and Martin appears to have done little but keep up standards as well as he was able;'<sup>17</sup> the implication of decline and lack of imagination cannot be sustained by the evidence (let alone the assertion that Stainer alone had been the reformer), though naturally evolution rather than revolution was characteristic of St Paul's, and not only of its music, after the upheavals of the 1870s. Martin's first colleague as Succentor had no doubts on the matter, writing that 'it will be generally admitted that under his hand the music at St Paul's did not cease to keep up the reputation to which it had attained under Stainer.'<sup>18</sup> One of Martin's legacies was his re-design of the cathedral organ: the work was completed in 1900, and reflected the taste of the times in adding two more Open Diapason stops to the Great and enlarging the Solo organ by the addition of imitative orchestral ranks. Many of the larger pedal ranks were moved up to the dome area to make room for these additions, and new Tuba stops at 16', 8' and 4' pitch were also

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<sup>15</sup> Novello, undated

<sup>16</sup> Oxford University Press, TCM 43, c.1925

<sup>17</sup> Scott *op. cit.* 28

<sup>18</sup> Russell *op. cit.* 87

**Example 14**  
Martin : *Hail, gladdening light !*

Thy glo-ries, Lord, they own, . . . they own, they own.

Thy glo-ries, Lord, they own, they own, they own.

Thy glo - ries, Lord, . . . they own, they own.

Thy glo-ries, Lord, they own, . . . they own, they own.

*rall.* *Slow*

*rall.*

*rall.*

*rall.*

*rall.* *Slow* *ff Full Org.*

Hail, glad-d'ning Light, Hail ! . . .

Hail, glad-d'ning Light, Hail ! . . .

Hail, glad-d'ning Light, Hail ! . . .

Hail, glad-d'ning Light, Hail ! . . .

Hail, glad-d'ning Light, Hail ! . . .

*ff* *fff* *fff* *fff* *fff*

## CHAPTER 5 : THE REFORMERS' SUCCESSORS (1885-1911)

### Example 15

**Martin : Communion Service in A (*Gloria in excelsis*)**

[illegible]

**Example 16**  
**Martin : *Ad Spiritum Sanctum***

*Animato.*

Send from Thy ce - les - tial

*Animato.*

come, O come, Ho - ly Spi - rit, come, Ho - ly Spi - rit, come, Send from Thy ce - les - tial

*Animato.*

come, O come, Ho - ly Spi - rit, come, Ho - ly Spi - rit, come, Send from Thy ce - les - tial

*Animato.*

come, O come, Ho - ly Spi - rit, come, Ho - ly Spi - rit, come, Send from Thy ce - les - tial

*Animato.* ♩ = 80.

home, send from Thy ce - les - tial home, The glo - ry, the glo - ry

home, send from Thy ce - les - tial home, The glo - ry, the glo - ry

home, send from Thy ce - les - tial home, The glo - ry, the glo - ry

home, send from Thy ce - les - tial home, The glo - ry, the glo - ry

*cres.*

*rall.* *Tempo 1mo.*

of Thy Light di - vine.

*rall.* *Tempo 1mo.*

of Thy Light di - vine. Ho - ly . . . Spi - rit, come, O come.

*rall.* *Tempo 1mo.*

of Thy Light di - vine. Ho - ly . . . Spi - rit, come, O come.

*rall.* *Tempo 1mo.* ♩ = 59.

*pp Org. ad lib.* *pp*

placed there: despite the attempts in recent years to restore the original 1872 scheme, much of the pedal department and the Tubas are still “upstairs.” Another significant addition was the ‘Altar Organ,’ four ranks of gently-voiced pipes situated above the stalls on the North side near the High Altar, to enable the Celebrant at the Holy Communion to be accompanied from the console of the Grand Organ, a task hitherto performed by a second organist playing the ‘Willis on wheels.’<sup>19</sup> Otherwise, his chief innovation was the introduction of a full orchestra at two additional services each year, the Holy Communion on the morning of the Patronal Festival, commencing in 1892 with Weber’s Mass in E flat, and the Advent performance of Spohr’s *Last Judgement*: in 1901 Brahms’ *Requiem* took its place, but Spohr made a brief re-appearance in 1903, and in 1905 the Succentor was asked to ascertain the cost of doing both works.<sup>20</sup> If this reflects an irreconcilable clash between the Spohrites and the Brahmins, the latter won the day, and the *Requiem* was done; but Spohr was back in 1907 and 1909 at least. The singing on these occasions won frequent praise: Gounod’s *St Cecilia Mass* and Mendelssohn’s *St Paul* at the 1894 Patronal Festival were ‘admirably in order,’<sup>21</sup> and the same occasion in 1908 was of ‘exceptional brilliance and beauty.’<sup>22</sup>

This is not to say that Martin’s work with the choir was without its problems, and it must be borne in mind that day-to-day authority over the men was still vested in the Succentor. The Minute Books continue to record the *minutiae* of lateness, absence and behaviour, from which one may extract the resolution (with no reason given) that the boys ‘were *not* allowed to sing at the dedication of the Melanesian mission steamship on May 26,’<sup>23</sup> and a choirman’s lateness being excused ‘as an engine collapsed in front of his train.’<sup>24</sup> but the underlying and serious problem was that many of the men appointed in 1872 had stayed in the choir, and by the end of the century they were growing old, not always gracefully. The situation was exacerbated by the continued existence of the six freehold vicars-choral: Lockey continued his permanent absence

<sup>19</sup> ‘St Paul’s Cathedral from 1871 (cont’d),’ *Musical Opinion* August 1930, 994

<sup>20</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 7 December 1901, 7 November 1903, 21 October 1905

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* 27 January 1894

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* 27 January 1908

<sup>23</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 25 April 1903

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* 7 November 1908



until death removed him in 1901,<sup>25</sup> but the death of Goss in 1880 and Stainer's resignation in 1888 brought the number of active freeholders in the choir back to five, so that the situation was then worse than in 1872 when, it will be recalled, only two freeholders were actually singing. The assistant vicars-choral were promoted to vacant vicar-choralships by seniority, and thus almost a third of the choirmen, and the older and sometimes less efficient at that, were protected from compulsory retirement: the workings of the weekday rota could produce a choir in which they constituted five or six of the twelve men, with perhaps a deputy or two to add further uncertainty. At least they could be fined and otherwise disciplined under the revised statutes of 1874, but although Chapter could suggest that they retire and supply a deputy it not could force them so to do. A legal opinion obtained in 1902 merely confirmed that nothing short of an Act of Parliament could affect their real status.<sup>26</sup>

The freehold vicars-choral enjoyed security and an enhanced salary. Their somewhat ill-defined seniority could cause problems, as at the performance of *St Paul* in 1890, when Stainer had returned to act as deputy for Martin, who was unwell. A bass solo was allotted to a new assistant, but Thomas Kempton, not long appointed vicar-choral, claimed the right to sing it and would not back down, despite Stainer's personal appeal as to an old friend. It was then proposed to omit the solo, but another vicar-choral pointed out that this would be bound to attract public comment, so a compromise was reached with the solo being given to a third party. The Succentor appealed to the Dean and Chapter, and Kempton was summoned to appear: in a written apology he accepted that the Organist or Succentor had the right to name soloists, and said that he had not meant to be antagonistic to Chapter, but had been misled as to the status of vicars-choral.<sup>27</sup> Alfred Kenningham, appointed vicar-choral on the same day as Kempton, was a somewhat contradictory character, a tenor still good enough to sing the part of the Narrator in the twentieth annual performance of the *St Matthew Passion* in March 1894, and the composer of a Service in E flat for men's voices, but summoned before Chapter on 11 November 1895 for 'an act of insubordination at choir practice.'

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* 4 December 1901

<sup>26</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 27 January 1902

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.* 4 February 1890

He promised 'not to interrupt Dr Martin again,' but within a few months he was fined half-a-crown for missing choir practice altogether.<sup>28</sup>

By the middle of the first decade of the new century three vicars-choral (Thomas Kempton, Alfred Kenningham and Robert De Lacy) and two assistants (William Davies and A. G. Fryer) were seriously inadequate for the performance of their duties. It was resolved that Kempton, Kenningham and Fryer 'be asked to retire from solo and verse work; if they decline to do so, they are to be excluded from the rota.'<sup>29</sup> De Lacy had already been banned. The order in respect of Kenningham was re-affirmed as late as 1916, and not until 1919 did he withdraw in favour of a 'permanent deputy.'<sup>30</sup> Davies (tenor) had already been asked to retire after being summoned before Chapter for 'extraordinary singing in the choir on Wednesday last.'<sup>31</sup> He was given a year's grace, but 'there was a bad break-down on Saturday afternoon by Mr Davies the tenor, whose singing in the anthem was most painful, and Sir George [Martin] asked the Succentor to communicate with the Precentor.' Clearly enough was enough: Davies, being only an assistant, could be made to resign from the following Christmas, and was represented by a deputy until then.<sup>32</sup>

Kempton's was a sad case: he had a broken rib, was useless at singing and had a history of bad conduct. The Chapter showed a commendable leniency in granting him a pension of £80 p.a., raised by private subscription to £100, on condition that he provide an approved deputy: he was allowed to continue earning £15 p.a. for singing in the voluntary choir on Sunday evenings, and Chapter added another £15 'as a gift in view of the difficulty of Mr Kempton's circumstances at the close of a long period of service in the Cathedral.'<sup>33</sup> As late as 1920 he was still alive and represented by permanent deputy.<sup>34</sup> One cannot but be moved by the doctor's report on Fryer, that 'his heart is seriously affected and he can only live a year or two; also [that] he is on the border of

<sup>28</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 2 November 1895, 29 February 1896

<sup>29</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 25 February 1905

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* 22 January 1916, 30 August 1919

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* 13 August 1904

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.* 28 July 1906

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.* 31 March & 12 May 1906

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* 10 January 1920

insanity:' it was agreed that he should remain in the choir as long as his health permitted, but some three years elapsed before he was pensioned off.<sup>35</sup> After a particularly bad Evensong one Thursday the Succentor and Organist recommended that Henry Dutton (alto) be asked to retire at Christmas 1913: this is of a certain interest in that he could not be compelled to do so, having been appointed vicar-choral only six years previously, but more so in that despite his presumed inadequacy he survived as the last freeholder, taking his place in the choir almost up to his death on Easter Sunday 1948 at the age of ninety-five.<sup>36</sup>

It is significant that the complaint against Dutton was made after a Thursday Evensong, i.e. one sung by the men alone with no treble line to cover up any shortcomings on the part of the adults; and Davies' spectacular failure was also at a men's service when the anthem was 'Seek him that maketh the seven stars' from Elgar's *The Light of Life*: if he attempted the rather taxing tenor solo the effect could well have been painful in the extreme. Services sung by the men alone had become much more numerous: an outbreak of scarlet fever in September 1885 had closed the choir school, and 'a month of men's voices, even under difficulties from the shortage of appropriate music, apparently inured the authorities to the possibility of a similar deprivation annually.'<sup>37</sup> Thus from 1886 the boys were absent for a complete month in the summer, an arrangement stoutly defended by Succentor Russell:

These Services are, of course, on the whole less pleasing and attractive than those in which the boys take part, and call forth occasionally some murmurs of complaint. But if people only knew how necessary a thorough and complete holiday is to boys who live in the heart of the City of London, and who, besides working hard all through the year, have no regular playground of wider dimensions than the roof of the school, they would not begrudge them the necessary recreation; or wish them, half at a time, to bear, as formerly, for some weeks, the great additional strain of what is usually undertaken by the whole number. Something, too, must be said with respect to the great advantages, in a sanitary point of view, of occasionally getting the whole school cleared out. And perhaps also a word may be added on behalf of those who are responsible for the care and instruction of the boys.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid.* 9 October 1908, 6 November 1909, 9 November 1912

<sup>36</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 8 February 1913, 26 January 1949

<sup>37</sup> *Prestige op. cit.* 158

<sup>38</sup> *Succentor's Report 1890*, 7

From 1896 the boys also had a week's holiday after Christmas and Easter,<sup>39</sup> and there were several more unscheduled closures of the choir school because of illness.<sup>40</sup> It was unfortunate that many of the choirmen took their holidays while the boys were absent: matters were particularly bad in the summer of 1893, when it was recorded that 'the musical services this week have been very imperfectly rendered, owing mainly to the great preponderance of deputies. Breakdowns have been frequent.'<sup>41</sup> After another complaint about the inadequacy of deputies in August 1900 some attempt was made to ensure that at least a nucleus of the regular men was on duty during the boys' holiday, but the unexpected absence of the boys in Easter Week 1906 after an influenza epidemic coincided with an unusually large attendance by deputy, resulting in tentative singing and the inevitable complaints in Chapter:

The men's services have been most unsatisfactory all the week – sung with no heart and most untuneful....The chapter requests the Precentor to confer with the organist and succentor with a view to the better rendering of the services in the absence of the boys, which in their opinion requires a radical reform....They ask the musical authorities to confer with the choir men on the subject of Deputies during the Boys' Holidays.<sup>42</sup>

It is ironic that on this occasion the deputies were there in force because the regular choirmen were taking their holiday in the week *before* the boys were expected to be away!

Imperfect as the system was, St Paul's was in this as in other respects providing a model for other cathedrals, for choristers' welfare was being taken rather more seriously and it was no longer acceptable for the boys to sing all year without a break. The disadvantages were the continuing dearth of good music in general and canticle settings in particular, to which successive Succentors drew attention, and the declining quality of the men as their average age increased: Martin and Macpherson's excellent choristers could usually disguise the imperfections of whatever selection of gentlemen the workings of the deputy system and the duty roster might throw up on any given day, but the men were now left on their own for nearly two months of the year, with somewhat

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<sup>39</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 18 April 1896

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* 17 October 1896 *et alibi*

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.* 5 August 1893

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.* 21 & 28 April, 19 May 1906

variable results. It was, however, still seen as essential to the cathedral's worship that the continuity of the daily services should be maintained. The former expedient of allowing half the boys away at a time merely weakened the choir, though it survived at York Minster until 1914;<sup>43</sup> an elaborate scheme at Canterbury, in which two separate boys' choirs alternated, proved too expensive and was abandoned in the 1970s.

If St Paul's was served by only one Organist throughout this long period of time, there were several incumbents of the office of Succentor. All avowed a continued allegiance to Sparrow Simpson's policy of eclecticism, but there were distinct and inevitable changes of emphasis which it is interesting to follow: reports continued to be published until 1907, though with diminishing frequency, and the regular weekly Music Lists chronicle the development of the choir's repertory. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, William Russell, Succentor 1885-93, had been a minor canon since 1876, throughout the years of the Stainer and Sparrow Simpson partnership: he could be trusted to continue the tradition they had established, and indeed collaborated with Stainer as joint editor of several publications.<sup>44</sup> However, he was aware of the tradition's shortcomings:

He [Stainer] was, perhaps, a little too ready to taboo some of the stiff and rather expressionless cathedral music of the past, of which probably he had been sickened as a boy: but on the other hand he took quite an interest in Plainsong, representing as it does the true church music of ancient time.<sup>45</sup>

These words suggest a familiarity with Stainer's address to the Leeds Congress of 1872 and armed with this authority Russell made haste to remedy what he saw as a serious omission from the cathedral's music; for one of his first acts upon becoming Succentor, while Stainer was still Organist, was to replace Anglican Chant by plainchant for the singing of the psalms at 'men only' services. At least one of the men was actively hostile: as an alto he must in any case have felt excluded from the new arrangement, and he also complained that they should be 'singing the most beautiful music that can be had, instead of falling back on crude stuff composed in days when the art of music was in its infancy.'<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Jackson *op. cit.* 105

<sup>44</sup> e.g. *The Cathedral Prayer Book* (Novello, 1891), and Novello's series of Short Anthems.

<sup>45</sup> Russell *op. cit.* 83

<sup>46</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 77, in Prestige *op. cit.* 159

Russell stoutly defended this innovation:

It may well to state the two principal reasons for which the introduction of plain-song chanting...was suggested : (1) Because the arrangement of harmonised double chants (excellent as some of those in use were), which gave the melody to the alto – and naturally, therefore, the weakest – voice, was not and *could* not be satisfactory. (2) Because S. Paul's having of late made it an object to give to the Diocese, so far as possible, an example of all the various kinds of music and of musical service ordinarily recognised – *i. e.* from the highest and most elaborate type, down to that which is simplest and most congregational – it did not seem fitting that Gregorian music, with its ancient pedigree, and employed, as it is, in so large a number of Churches, should be left altogether unrepresented. And these men's voice Services, which undoubtedly correspond to a certain extent with those for which Plain-song music was originally chiefly designed, seemed to offer a favourable opportunity for such an experiment, quite apart from any question as to the merits of Plain-song musically and artistically.<sup>47</sup>

The rest of this Report contained the usual lists of the current repertory: in apologising for the small number of additions, the author explained that because some 500 anthems were already in use it was difficult to find space for many more, but that new settings of the morning canticles in particular were always welcome. The most notable additions were the Communion Service in F by Alan Gray (1855-1935), the first appearance of a composer whose works were to be widely sung in cathedrals until quite recently, and Gounod's *Messe des Orphéonistes* for men's voices: some of the *Christmas Oratorio* was revived, and short anthems by older composers such as Boyce, Creighton, Marcello and Tye were introduced alongside more Gounod, Mendelssohn, Spohr and Sullivan. An anthem by Josef Rheinberger (1839-1901) was an interesting novelty.

It must be borne in mind that Stainer was still organist, and would be for another year: it is therefore all the more interesting, and further proof (if any were still needed) of the ultimate power of the Succentor in the choice of music, to observe the extent to which the new occupant of that office pruned the lists. It was chiefly his predecessor's weaker novelties that were discarded: W. H. Gladstone's and C. E. Miller's morning and evening services, a sizeable group of Communion settings including *Eyre in E flat*, *Oakeley in E flat*, *Schubert in C* and *Tours in F*, most of Graun's *Passion Music* and Gade's *Sion*, and anthems by such luminaries as Balfe, Cruickshank, Eyre, Field, Gibbs, Gladstone, Monk, Prout, Kellow J. Pye and Lord Henry Somerset. Such a purge was unsurprising, but Russell also did the very thing for which he was (some thirty-five years later, admittedly) to criticise Stainer, for the axe fell equally on the composers of the allegedly 'stiff and expressionless' cathedral music of the past: services such as

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<sup>47</sup> *Succentor's Report 1887*, 10

*Child in G*, *Ouseley in A* (morning) and *E flat* (evening), *Nares in F*, *Patrick in G minor*, *Tallis in D minor* and *S. S. Wesley in F* (morning) were removed; Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and Handel's *Messiah* were pruned, and inroads were made into the works of Barnby and S. S. Wesley and some of the few surviving anthems by the old school of Boyce, Croft, Crotch, Gibbons and Greene.

This continued depreciation of the works of the 'old school' was the subject of some unfavourable comment when *The Guardian* reviewed Russell's 1887 Report:

The enormous number of anthems in constant use is referred to as a difficulty, and we are informed that each cannot possibly be performed more than once a year. But when we turn to the list of these anthems, we find many concerning which we are bound to say that the necessity for performing them does not strike us as very great. At least fifty compositions, to say nothing of arrangements from foreign sources, might be struck out without harming English music in the least degree.<sup>48</sup>

There were, continued the reviewer, only one hundred and thirteen items by the 'old school,' but sixty by Mendelssohn alone: the numerous oratorio excerpts were no longer necessary. If foreign composers were wanted, Palestrina was more desirable than the composer of *Mors et Vita*. In replying Russell justified the apparent neglect of the older cathedral music by 'making the complaint that only a single anthem, each belonging to Byrde, Creyghton or Tye, appear to be in existence at all. At least they are not to be found in Novello's catalogue or in the book of the words in use at Westminster Abbey as well as at St Paul's;' and a great deal of older music had been written when the Church of England was at a low ebb, and reflected such lifelessness.<sup>49</sup> Thus the new Succentor was in practice even more of a modernist than his predecessor: whether or not he would have used more of 'Byrde' had he known if its existence is a question impossible to answer and of doubtful validity, as the practitioners of the 'Old School' were equally culpable for their neglect of what later became regarded as the 'Golden Age.'

The first performance of Gounod's *Messe Solennelle* was given on 6 June 1887: Stainer had held out against it for some time because of its excessive length, and seemed to be proved right when Russell conjoined it with Gounod's lengthy *Te Deum*

<sup>48</sup> *The Guardian* 26 October 1887. Stanford was to make much the same criticisms in his address to the Church Congress in 1899 (*Studies & Memories* 67f.).

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.* 2 November 1887

and *Benedictus*.<sup>50</sup> This was, however, the only new Communion Service recorded in the next report, published in 1890 and the first after Martin's appointment. Consolidation seemed to be the order of the day as the new Organist settled in to his new responsibilities, though one may note the introduction of Morning Services in F by both Gray and Stanford among more typically Victorian novelties. Some movements from Brahms' *Requiem* were revived after temporary disuse, and large-scale unaccompanied anthems by Rheinberger and Spohr were introduced, along with a number of short anthems suitable for use at weekday morning services or as Introits, though the list of their composers is unimpressive. The rota of Service settings was adjusted so that so far as possible each Service was repeated on a different day of the week for the benefit of those in both choir and congregation who habitually attended on a particular day.<sup>51</sup>

Shortly after becoming Succentor, Russell had added to his responsibilities the post of Headmaster of the Choir School: the strain of the dual appointment undermined his health, and he resigned the former post in 1893 and the latter a year later.<sup>52</sup> His successor credited him with having consolidated and completed the work begun by Sparrow Simpson, especially 'in the direction of selecting the music with a special view to the reflection in it, as far as possible, of the colour of the current season of the church's year.'<sup>53</sup> With this opinion one can only agree, and in effect the cathedral's musical direction had enjoyed (or endured, depending on one's point of view) some twenty years' uninterrupted continuity of purpose.

The next Succentor was Lewis Gilbertson, a member of the College of Minor Canons since 1882: he published one report (1898) in the afterglow of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee and the conferral of a knighthood upon Dr Martin. The general musical policy was unchanged:

The principle and method of selection which has been followed for the past 24 years is maintained: in principle the aim is to present what is good in church music of all schools, subject only to its fitness under the acoustic conditions presented by St. Paul's and its suitability to the choir. In regard to the method, the Succentor, who is responsible for drawing up the weekly service lists, only adds to the

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<sup>50</sup> Frost *op. cit.* 79-80

<sup>51</sup> *Succentor's Report 1890*, 5-7

<sup>52</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 6 November 1893, 10 October 1894

<sup>53</sup> *Succentor's Report 1898*, 10



repertoire from which these lists are composed such selections as, being suitable on general grounds, the Organist also considers to be musically fit.<sup>54</sup>

It is not without significance that the Organist was now *de facto* exercising a veto over the Succentor's selection of music: Sir George Martin, however amiable in personality, was one of the country's most eminent and senior church musicians, influential in the affairs of the Royal College of Music and the Royal College of Organists, and it is reasonable to detect the beginnings of a process, however gradual, by which the musical control of cathedral music passed from clergy to organists.

Whether Succentor or Organist had the greater influence, the 1898 report's list of music recently introduced shows a commendable readiness to admit new compositions, and an ability to pick 'winners' as soon as they appeared. Dvořák's Mass in D and Gounod's third *Messe Solennelle* (for Easter) were characteristic of the late nineteenth-century St Paul's 'grand style,' as was Macpherson's Communion Service in E flat (which enjoyed a great popularity until World War II), but the list also contained such staples of the twentieth-century cathedral repertoire as *Gray in A*, *Harwood in A flat*, *Noble in B minor* and *Stanford in F*, with several of Stanford's anthems including *And I saw another angel*, *If thou shalt confess* and *The Lord is my Shepherd*. Perhaps more interesting was the addition of a mass by Palestrina (*Aeterna Christi munera*, in Martin's English adaptation) and the anthems *When to the temple Mary went* by Eccard (1553-1611) and *Arise O ye servants of God* by Sweelinck (1562-1621), English versions published by Novello in the *Bach Choir Magazine*: the revival of older music was getting under way, and St Paul's was perfectly happy to be involved in it provided that an octavo edition was available! Some anthems of Boyce, Croft and Greene were reinstated: hardly anything was deleted.

The Revd H. A. Tapsfield succeeded Gilbertson in 1903, and the resulting vacancy in the College of Minor Canons was filled by the Revd S. J. Childs Clarke, who succeeded Tapsfield as Succentor only three years later, in January 1906. It was an unusually rapid promotion, compared with the lengthy apprenticeship served by his predecessors, and in the report which he published a year later (the last of the series) he admits both his inexperience and his indebtedness to the system established by his

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<sup>54</sup> *Succentor's Report 1898*, 5

predecessors. He also points to the increasing trend towards the revival of older works, but with a warning:

Among the additions will be found the works of several composers of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; but it is as well to remember, in our enthusiasm for some of the gems recently rescued from oblivion by the partisans of the older schools of musicians, that even a genius may have his dull and uninspired moments. The century that has closed since the issue of the last report, has contributed a most glorious page to the history of Church music, and the promise of the present century is indeed fair.

St. Paul's, least of any of the great churches, can ever afford to overlook the claims of the later composers in favour of "old masters," considering the debt which we owe to the devotion and genius of her modern musicians.<sup>55</sup>

The choice from the works of these 'old masters' was, as ever, circumscribed by what was available in printed octavo editions: the antiquarian interests of Sir Frederick Bridge, Organist of Westminster Abbey, resulted in the publication by Bosworth of a series (largely still in print) of anthems by British and Continental composers of the late Renaissance, translated into English where necessary. Four by Gibbons (including *This is the record of John*), two by Lotti and one by Victoria appear in the 1907 report; and some Palestrina and more Victoria were introduced to St Paul's in the next few years. Three masses by Palestrina (*Assumpta est Maria*, *Aeterna Christi munera* and *Papae Marcelli*) were sung during Advent and Lent, albeit in English and, in common with all Communion settings sung at St Paul's, shorn of *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*: Byrd, Patrick and Tallis were back in the list of canticle settings.

If the new Succentor (or the old Organist or perhaps the able and energetic Sub-Organist) was following the emerging fashion for this form of musical archaeology, there could be no serious complaint that contemporary music was being neglected. In the first decade of the new century there were introduced brand-new compositions destined to enjoy enduring popularity, such as Alcock's Morning Service in B flat, Bairstow's Evening Service in D and *Save us, O Lord*, and Stanford's complete Morning, Communion and Evening Service in C: sadly the same cannot be said of the six-part unaccompanied Communion Service which Stainer wrote expressly for St Paul's in 1899, right at the end of his life, for it never really 'took hold' in the lists. Rather surprising is the omission of Charles Wood's Evening Services, three of which were in print by now.<sup>56</sup> There were English adaptations of Brahms' *Es is das Heil* ('A

<sup>55</sup> *Succentor's Report 1907*, iii-iv

<sup>56</sup> All pub. Novello: *E flat*, 1891; *D*, 1898; *C minor*, 1900.

saving health') and Rheinberger's Mass in E. Unfortunately there was not enough innovation to compensate for the essentially static nature of the cathedral's repertoire, pardonable and perhaps inevitable given the constraints imposed by the limited amount of rehearsal time and the unpredictable day-to-day composition of the men's choir, with its members deputising for each other or putting in deputies from the approved list: not only the hardy perennials of the native school, including the cathedral's own composer-organists Attwood, Goss, Martin and Stainer, continued to dominate the lists, but also what might pardonably be mistaken for the complete works of Gounod, Mendelssohn, Spohr and Sullivan. In its music St Paul's was still living on the capital accumulated by the Victorian reformers.

The same could be said of the cathedral's administration, for a massive and stifling inertia had set in.

The achievements of 1911 amounted to no more than realization of the ideals of 1871. Victorianism had flowered in St. Paul's for forty years and continued to put forth glorious bloom, but nothing had been introduced which might justly be described as embodying a new strain in either thought or in devotion.... Now young iconoclasts were active who knew not Stainer and cared nothing for the devotionally featureless musicianship...that marked the current convention of worship. Such men thought the Cathedral services too long and slow, too pompous and provincial....Even in religion, Victorianism was not enough: some of its finest fruits were overgrown a lot too much.<sup>57</sup>

Dean Church had died in 1890 and been replaced from within the Chapter by Canon Gregory: Canon Henry Scott Holland had acquired the office of Precentor on the death in 1886 of the absentee Belli; and these two men between them governed the cathedral until 1911, when Scott Holland was unexpectedly offered, and rather to his own surprise accepted, the Regius Professorship of Divinity at Oxford. Dean Gregory, by now over ninety years old and unwilling to continue without Holland's support, promptly resigned also and died on 2 August in the same year. Before he died St Paul's had a new dean, another canon in place of Holland, and a new archdeacon: 'an assemblage of largely untried individuals had the responsibility of grappling with problems hitherto unforeseen, as wild skies lit the opening of a new and troubled era of national and ecclesiastical time.'<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Prestige *op. cit.* 237-8

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.* 248

## MUSIC THROUGH WAR AND DANGER (1911-25)

These services seem to me a criminal waste of time. I have held different views at different times about the character and nature of the Creator of the Universe; but never at any time have I thought it at all probable that he is the kind of person who enjoys being serenaded!...The noise gets on my nerves and interferes with consecutive thought – I am conscious of growing irritation and dislike of the cathedral. (William Ralph Inge, Dean of St Paul's 1911-34).<sup>1</sup>

Dean Inge ('I rhyme with *sting*, not with *cringe*') was chosen by the then Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, to 'restore the traditions of scholarship and culture associated with the Deanery in the past, and at the same time maintain the services of the Cathedral at the standard of sober beauty which Dean Gregory has done so much to establish.'<sup>2</sup> The former Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge was well equipped to do the former, but the wisdom of appointing one so devoid of sympathy with the Cathedral's music and services must be questioned. As his biographer admits,

Dr Inge entered on his duties in some ways uncommonly well equipped, in some ways handicapped. The effect was what might be expected. The man who presided over St Paul's was presently one of the most famous of its Deans, but he presided over it with a certain detachment and a certain friction.<sup>3</sup>

His sense of duty made him a loyal and regular attender of the daily services, though he would pass the time by reading a book or, famously on one occasion, counting the number of appearances of the phrase 'I wrestle and pray' in [J.C.] Bach's eponymous motet. Having scant sympathy with the cathedral's music and (mildly) Anglo-Catholic churchmanship, he studiously ignored both, leaving them much to their own devices: both seemed rather out-of-date by the end of his reign. Nor did his uneasy relations with the rest of the Chapter encourage anything that smacked of innovation.

The only change of note in the years between Inge's appointment and the onset of war in 1914 was a decision to sing the Te Deum and Benedictus to chants on great

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Fox, *Dean Inge* (London: Murray, 1960), 115

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* 103

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* 120

festivals.<sup>4</sup> This may owe something to the Dean's dislike of long services, or, less probably, to a feeling that some greater congregational involvement was desirable on such occasions. In the light of this it is singular to discover *Inge in A* among the Morning Services in use round about this time: whether the composer was a distant relative, or merely happened to have the same surname, is impossible to discover. Otherwise the great annual round of services went on as before: the relatively few additions to the repertoire included Parry's *I was glad*, fully ten years after its composition and sometimes sung in a drastically shortened version commencing at 'O pray for the peace of Jerusalem;' and Elgar's *Psalm 29* ('Give unto the Lord') which was commissioned for the 1914 Festival of the Sons of the Clergy. Few others of these specially-composed anthems secured a lasting place. However, much more was now being discarded than added, with more frequent repetition of what remained: 1911-12 (see Appendices 7ff.) saw a significant reduction in the number of anthems by such previous mainstays of the repertoire as Goss, Gounod, Handel, Mendelssohn, Smart and Spohr.

A committee met to consider the conditions of service of the Vicars-Choral and Assistants: it presented its conclusions in the summer of 1914, representing them as a step towards the goal of remodelling the whole choir on a uniform basis, though offering no practical proposals for the abolition of the Vicars-Choral. The Assistant Vicars-Choral were nevertheless well pleased to be offered an enhanced salary of £150 p.a. plus £3 holiday allowance, with an improved pension and the safeguarding of their rights: but a Vicar-Choral appointed earlier that year received £219/5/-, illustrating the continued attractiveness of the position and explaining why the choirmen were so reluctant to agree to its abolition.<sup>5</sup>

The onset of war later that year had little immediate effect on the choir: most of the men were too old to volunteer for the armed forces, and the two who did so in August 1914 were simply replaced by permanent deputies.<sup>6</sup> Childs Clarke, the Succentor, departed early in the war to be a Naval Chaplain, his deputy from within the College of Minor Canons being the Revd E. T. R. Johnston. He proved a capable deputy,

<sup>4</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 4 January 1913

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* 25 July, 10 January 1914

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* 8, 12 August 1914

introducing a limited amount of new music such as John Ireland's Morning Service in F, a Communion Service in B flat by the young Henry Ley, and Alan Gray's imposing Evening Service in F minor for unaccompanied double choir. He reintroduced anthems discontinued by Childs Clarke and conversely abandoned a few of his novelties and a number of old favourites: there were only a few completely new anthems, and the analysis for 1915-16 in Appendices 7-13 shows a repertoire still recognisably the same as in pre-war years.

The Sunday evening service and the special music in Advent had to be cancelled after the imposition of the blackout in 1915, and in November of that year attendance was 'very badly affected by unpunctuality on the railways. On one day all four basses were absent till the middle of the Te Deum.'<sup>7</sup> Two more men (both of them tenors) joined the colours in February 1916, and deputies were found once again, but a sudden exodus of men in the spring and early summer was met by a different and drastic re-arrangement of the music: either it had become impossible to obtain any more 'permanent deputies' of the right quality, or the cathedral's funds could not meet the additional expense. In April an alto was called up, leaving only three to sing on Thursday, Friday and Saturday; one of the basses was only available at weekends from May, and likewise a tenor from June onwards, leaving only three tenors on Monday and Tuesday; a bass was called up in June (only three basses now attended on Monday, Wednesday and Friday) and another tenor was called up in July.<sup>8</sup>

The drastic re-arrangement decided on was to leave the music on Mondays and Saturdays entirely to the boys,<sup>9</sup> and to abolish the men's weekday rota, so that the remaining five altos, five tenors (reduced to four when another departed in August) and four basses attended on Sundays and the other four weekdays, with an extra tenor and bass on Sundays. During the boys' holidays the remaining men had to be spaced out over the whole week, with some very sparse choirs as a result, the nadir being reached on Friday 26 July 1918 when the choir consisted of four altos, one tenor (a deputy) and three basses (two deputies): not until February 1919 was the choir complete again.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* 16 October, 27 November 1915

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* 9 April 1916: *Attendance Registers* 1916 *passim*

<sup>9</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 20 May 1916

<sup>10</sup> *Attendance Registers* 1916-19

The death of Sir George Martin was another blow, though Macpherson was appointed organist immediately, with Stanley Marchant of St Peter's, Eaton Square appointed sub-organist: his salary of only £150 p.a. suggests that Macpherson was to continue to do most of the work.<sup>11</sup> In any event Marchant was called up early in 1917, being paid £90 p.a. in his absence, his substitute Mr G\_\_\_ (the name is indecipherable) receiving the same amount.<sup>12</sup>

The great musical performances on St Paul's day and the *St Matthew Passion* in Holy Week continued unbroken, as did the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy, graced in 1917 by a particularly fine anthem commissioned from Edward Bairstow, organist of York Minster;<sup>13</sup> but the effect on the daily services was most marked. The full choir's repertoire was reduced after 1916, there being fewer services to be sung by the full choir, and the more elaborate works tended to disappear; but suddenly a whole new repertoire had to be created for the boys to sing on their own.<sup>14</sup> It was an easy matter to select soprano arias from Bach, Handel and Mendelssohn, but, most commendably, the boys rapidly learnt anthems expressly written for this medium by contemporary cathedral musicians such as Hugh Blair, Herbert Brewer, Percy Buck and John E. West. Macpherson and Marchant composed several, and the former's *Awake, my soul* attained wide popularity; but the morning canticles were invariably sung to chants, as were those at Evensong apart from the sporadic appearance of settings by Blair, Lee Williams, Macpherson, Sydney Nicholson and West. That by Macpherson, in A major, calls for the boys on both *Decani* and *Cantoris* to be divided, even though the music is never in more than three real parts (Ex. 17): it seems to have suffered the fate of many another work too complicated to fit easily into the daily routine. It was while the boys were singing one Monday morning that there was a direct hit on the central telegraph office 150 yards from the cathedral: they calmly carried on with the service, and so impressed Dean Inge that he 'went round to the Choir House to thank the boys for their courage.'<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 26 February, 11 & 25 March 1916

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* 10 March 1917

<sup>13</sup> *Lord, thou hast been our refuge*, (Novello, 1917)

<sup>14</sup> v. *infra* Appendix 14

<sup>15</sup> *William R. Inge, Diary of a Dean* (London: Hutchinson, 1949), 39

**Example 17**  
Macpherson : Evening Service in A (boys' voices)

*Andante.*

*Ped.*

**FULL.**  
*mp*

mer - cy hath

He re - mem-b'ring His mer - cy hath hol - pen His ser - vant

**FULL.**  
*mp*

He re - mem-b'ring His mer - cy hath hol - pen His ser - vant

*cres. poco a poco.*

Is - ra - el, as He prom - is - ed to our . . . fore -

*cres. poco a poco.*

Is - ra - el, as He prom - is - ed to our . . . fore -

*Sw.*

*Soft 8 ft. Gt.*

*cres. poco a poco.*

*f*

fa - thers, A - bra - ham and his seed, . . . for ev - er.

*rall. e dim.*

*f*

fa - thers, A - bra - ham and his seed, . . . for ev - er.

*rall. e dim.*

*f*

*rall. e dim.*

*p*



Chants also replaced settings of the canticles at the weekday 'men only' services: perhaps this was the lesser evil when the choir was so reduced in numbers, or possibly brevity was essential in wartime conditions, but the effect can only have been dismal in the extreme. Two settings of *Te Deum* and *Benedictus*, four of the Holy Communion and six of *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* sufficed for those few Sundays when the boys were away. At least the daily sung services were continued without interruption, whereas at many cathedrals weekday morning services ceased to be sung at all: even at Durham, a wealthy cathedral with a large choir, choral Mattins on weekdays was suspended 'for the duration' and reinstated only on Tuesdays and Thursdays after the war.

After the pre-war pattern of full weekday services was resumed, the anthem on Thursday mornings was still frequently sung by the boys alone (until 1924) even though the men were present: it may be that there was a reluctance to lose the special repertory which had been created for the boys, or perhaps the effect of their singing on their own was considered too beautiful to be foregone. The canticles at 'men-only' services on weekdays continued to be sung to Anglican Chant, and the full choir sometimes suffered a similar restriction, as at Evensong on 26 and 27 May 1919: these were Rogation Days when the Litany was sung at the end of the service, so no doubt brevity was thought desirable, but one could hardly imagine the eminent Victorians being troubled by such a consideration!

The Succentor, resuming his duties after war service, was content not to resurrect the Service settings abandoned after 1916, confirming his deputy's judgement, though some of the anthems he had discontinued were reinstated: there was little if any innovation apart from the belated introduction of Ireland's *Greater Love*,<sup>16</sup> nor did the state of the choir encourage it. The boys, in common with the nation at large, were feeling the effects of a wartime diet far inferior to that of the Second War: they were sent home between 29 February and 5 March 1920, and there were other bouts of illness culminating in two extended closures of the choir-school the next year due to outbreaks of diphtheria.<sup>17</sup> The men took some time to settle down: one resigned in August 1919 as he was still in the RAF, and another having been given three months notice on 21

<sup>16</sup> Stainer & Bell 1912, dedicated *To Charles Macpherson Esq. Mus. D. and the Choristers of St Paul's Cathedral*. It was not performed in the Cathedral for some eight years after its composition.

<sup>17</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 2 July & 24 September 1921

May was seen no more after the beginning of July. Deputies were provided for both.<sup>18</sup> Kenningham, one of the two surviving members of the 1873 choir, retired in August, retaining £150 p.a. of his Vicar-Choral's stipend as a pension, and there were sundry new appointments including George Mountford Scott who was to serve for over thirty years,<sup>19</sup> though at least two Assistant Vicars-Choral (G. May and E. Marriott) were allowed to remain as deputies for six months after retirement at sixty: the former was granted £100 pa. plus his pension and had his six-month extension renewed at least four more times.<sup>20</sup> Two more left the choir in 1923, one of their replacements being Tom Purvis (tenor), formerly of Canterbury Cathedral, who continued to sing in the choir until well into the 1950s.<sup>21</sup>

One reason for this willingness to retain men after pensionable age may have been that the stipend offered was no longer so attractive to newcomers after the wartime depreciation in the value of money, which had affected the cathedral's financial situation very seriously, dependent as it was on the Cathedral Commissioners' settlement of some fifty years previously. The men had been refused a cost-of-living increase in 1916, though a New Year bonus of £5 was granted;<sup>22</sup> an interim increase of £30 in 1919 was partly funded by the abolition of the sixth Minor Canonry in 1920, and was the prelude to a thorough review of salaries later that year.<sup>23</sup> The choir's salaries were to be increased to £200 p.a. (£190 during the probationary year) with £210 for the six Vicars-Choral who thus effectively had their pay reduced, it being thought 'desirable that the Vicars-Choral and Assistant Vicars-Choral be reduced to one body of 18 men under the same conditions, unless a smaller number was sufficient. Should Vicars-Choral exist after 29 September 1923, and be receiving £210 p.a., a contributory

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.* 16 August 1919

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* 30 August, 11 October 1919, 10 January 1920

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* 10 April 1920, 13 August 1921, 7 January 1922

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* 13 May, 9 June, 7 July 1923

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* 24 October 1916, 13 January 1917

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.* 30 August 1918, 24 January 1920

pension fund should be formed for them.<sup>24</sup> Even after this, though, the men were relatively much worse off than in Victorian times.

Thoroughly alarmed by this suggestion that a smaller choir would suffice, the Organist wrote to C[hilds] C[larke] from the Unicorn Hotel, Ripon:

I regard the proposal with unmitigated concern, and for the future of all cathedrals, with profound misgiving.

Questions of sentiment cannot be disregarded in considering practical ways and means, for after all, why do people come to St Paul's when they have their own churches? Does sentiment play no part? The music at St Paul's enlarges the ritual meaning of each service, and if this is interfered with in the serious way proposed, I foresee that the position and influence of the cathedral will be dangerously lowered.

It is simply unthinkable that the chief Anglican Church situated in the midst of the greatest city in the world, cannot raise enough money somewhere to pay for the upkeep of the choir.

The practical objections seem to be no less than the sentimental. If the boys have one of their occasional epidemics, are the musical services to cease? And what is to happen during the boys' holidays?

If the proposal is carried out, it is quite unlikely that the standard prior to 1914 will ever be restored.

If the number of men's voices is to be reduced, it will be impossible to give notice to the Vicars Choral. The ones to suffer will be the younger members of the choir, to whom we look most for maintaining the standard. As the older ones drop out, so will the tradition of many years go with them.

This evil thing must not happen at St Paul's. If it does, it will never be righted.

To prevent it, money is needed. Have the Ecclesiastical Commissioners no power to save the position of their first church? If they have not, then there are the City Companies to turn to. It is not impossible that Sir Ernest Cooper, who is likely to be the next Lord Mayor, may be able to do something, as he is musical and devoted to St Paul's. If the pride and interest of the City Companies were properly engaged, we might yet see the cathedral saved from the proposed degradation. If they should be induced to help, why should they not have some chapel of their own in the Cathedral? There would then be a stronger link between the City and the Cathedral than there is at present. Then there is the question of the collections. How much of these goes towards the choir? Or what is meant by "the maintenance of the service" as printed on the service papers?

These three possible ways, either separately or together, should be considered. Two of them are outside sources, and the remaining one is domestic.

As we are asked to offer proposals, there is one more domestic one of a drastic but practical nature, and it must be taken in the same impersonal way as the manner of spirit in which it is offered.

In some future time it might be possible to combine one of the Canonries with the Deanship. This would make it possible to sell the Chapter House, with the interest of a portion of the money thus obtained for immediate needs, and investing the rest at compound interest for such time as is considered advisable. Though this last is a hateful idea and perhaps difficult to conceive, it has the merit of being domestic and free of outside influences. At the same time it would relieve the Cathedral of financial strain for a very long time.<sup>25</sup>

It proved possible to keep the full number both of Canons and choirmen: most of the Chapter House was rented out to a bank to provide some additional income. In an attempt to induce at least a few of the elderly freeholders to retire, a pension scheme offering two-thirds of their salary was instituted for Vicars-Choral with over thirty

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* 3 March 1920

<sup>25</sup> Letter from Macpherson, undated but in *Succentor's Detailed Accounts 1912-30*, in page for Quarter ending 27 June 1919

years' service, though funds would not permit the payment of more than three pensions at a time.<sup>26</sup>

By the mid-1920s matters had settled down somewhat, and a new Succentor<sup>27</sup> was beginning to give the cathedral's music a more up-to-date look: if at first this chiefly involved the removal of virtually all the remaining Gounod and a great deal of Mendelssohn, Spohr and Sullivan, Stainer having suffered the same fate rather earlier, it also included the introduction of a selection from the early numbers of '*Tudor Church Music*' newly published in Octavo (the format apparently essential to its acceptance) by Oxford University Press, and from the similar productions of other music publishers. It was now the height of modernity to be digging up the past, and St Paul's can be seen to have been more in step with the current trend than many another cathedral, despite Fellowes' disparaging reference to 'the mid-Victorian taste, which survived at St Paul's for some years after the revival [*presumably the 'Tudor revival'*] had set in elsewhere.'<sup>28</sup> Byrd is handsomely represented in the 1924-5 lists by *Hail O hail true body (Ave verum)*, *I laid me down to rest*, *O Christ who art the light and day (Christe qui lux es)*, *Sing joyfully* and *The souls of the righteous (Justorum animae)*; and some more anthems by Sweelinck are an interesting innovation. Ireland's Communion Service in C and Evening Service in F had come into use by now, useful and concise works of moderate difficulty, but the one striking novelty among the Evening Services is a setting in A by Macpherson for unaccompanied double choir, composed in 1916, costing one shilling and sixpence and running to no fewer than forty-nine pages: one can only wonder what possessed him to write it, and to pay Novello to publish it as 'author's property,' for like several other elaborate pieces it never stood any chance of fitting into the cathedral's tightly constrained rota of service settings. It appeared in the service lists for February 1924 and 19 July 1925 before finally being sung on 6 June 1926, its first and only public performance (Ex. 18).

This episode is but an extreme illustration of a problem that had long confronted the cathedral's musicians and would do so for many more years. It was extremely difficult to introduce any but the most straightforward of new service settings when the available

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<sup>26</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 22 October 1921

<sup>27</sup> The Revd M. F. Foxell

<sup>28</sup> Fellowes *op. cit.* 236

## Example 18

Macpherson : Evening Service in A (double choir)

allargando *ff* rall.

- men, — A - - - men, A - - - men.

allargando *ff* rall.

- men, — A - - men, A - - men, A - - - men.

allargando *ff* rall.

- men, A - - - men, A - - men, A - - - men.

allargando *ff* rall.

- men, A - - - men, A - - - men, A - - - men.

allargando *ff* rall.

A - - - men, A - - - men, A - - - men.

allargando *ff* rall.

A - - - men, A - men, A - men, A - - - men.

allargando *ff* rall.

A - men, A - - men, A - - - men, A - - - men.

allargando *ff* rall.

A - - - men, A - men, A - - - men, A - - men.

allargando rall.

*ff*

practice time was needed for anthems proper to a specific season, which by their nature came round only once a year; the more colourful 'High-Victorian' music had been removed from the repertoire but not been replaced in equal quantity, and the daily service music was appearing both repetitive and perfunctory, perhaps in part as a consequence of the Dean's indifference. From mid-1924 the boys were excused Mattins on Mondays;<sup>29</sup> but canticles sung by the men to Anglican Chant, with a couple of verses of a hymn as the anthem, were no adequate substitute, no matter how pressing the claims of the boys' education. It was a far cry from the Victorian vision of worship which must 'uplift something of an ideal;...it must show that men are putting their very best into the acts by which they hold communion with their God and Saviour.'<sup>30</sup>

More attention seemed to be lavished on the special services with orchestra: they offered greater artistic satisfaction as well as catching the public's interest, though as stated earlier very little of the specially-composed music found its way into the day-to-day music schemes. The Requiems of Brahms and Mozart had become the usual choice for the Advent service, and additionally on 23 December 1924 the first and second parts of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* were given with orchestra, with *Come, Jesu, come* thrown in for good measure. The most striking, and enduring, of the early post-war commissions for the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy was Vaughan Williams' *Lord, thou hast been our refuge* (1921): *Bairstow in D* was orchestrated for the 1922 Patronal Festival Evensong.

The cathedral had survived a World War with its musical programme substantially intact, even if the heart seemed to have gone out of parts of the daily routine; there were financial problems, but the choir was at full strength, albeit not as well paid now and finding men of good quality harder to recruit. The condition of the building was another matter.

Fears for the stability of the dome area had been felt before the war, even if the Dean was not disposed to take them seriously:

When the new Dean arrived in 1911 the alarm had already been raised....When extensive repairs were deemed necessary the main part of the effort to raise funds for the purpose fell upon Canon Alexander, a difficult character, but with a remarkable portion of that special gift which runs a successful appeal....It was generally allowed that Alexander was the leader in three successive appeals, in 1914,

<sup>29</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 31 May 1924

<sup>30</sup> Henry Scott Holland; in Mary Church, *Life and Letters of Dean Church* (London, 1895), 211

1922, and 1925: they raised altogether £400,000. Alexander was perhaps rather too well aware of what the Cathedral owed to him: the Dean perhaps did not appreciate his methods as generously as he might have done, and he refused to be an alarmist. But alarm is the spring-board of an appeal, and Alexander knew it.<sup>31</sup>

The Dean was certainly alarmed when on Christmas Eve 1924 the City Surveyor served notice on the Dean and Chapter that St Paul's was a 'dangerous structure,' and an appeal supported by the Lord Mayor (a Roman Catholic who nevertheless 'played up splendidly') and taken up by *The Times* brought in £200,000 in a very short time. 'The interior of the eight supporting piers, crushed by the weight of the dome and cupola, was grouted with cement under high pressure, which rendered them virtually monolithic. New chains of stainless steel were wrapped round the dome to prevent it spreading....The decay of more than two centuries was overtaken at last.'<sup>32</sup>

To allow the work to proceed without delay, all weekday morning services were abandoned from the end of March 1925, except for Christmas and Good Friday. Not even the Patronal Festival was exempt at first, the Festival Communion Service with orchestra being cancelled altogether in 1926. The Chancel and Dome areas were closed completely, temporary stalls for choir and clergy being set up in the Nave, and the small organ, 'the Willis on wheels,' accompanied the services until such time as the Grand Organ could be re-erected down there in the North aisle.<sup>33</sup> An emergency in time of peace had dealt the Cathedral's music a blow which war-time had failed to inflict.

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<sup>31</sup> Fox *op. cit.* 182

<sup>32</sup> Prestige *op. cit.* 242-3

<sup>33</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 7 March, 13 June 1925

## FUTURE SAFETY ASSURED? (1925-39)

I often felt that the disastrous happenings to the Cathedral sank deeper into Macpherson's soul than he would admit, though he told me he never expected to play again under the dome. If to an occasional visitor it meant the break of a lifelong tradition, how profoundly it must have wounded one so intimately connected with some of the finest years in the Cathedral's history! As we walked in mournful procession through the dismantled dome to his grave in the crypt, the truth of the words "I see that all things come to an end" was never more forcibly illustrated. (Sir Walter Alcock)<sup>1</sup>

No-one seemed prepared to predict how long the work of reconstructing the structure of the dome would take, nor did Macpherson's pessimism seem ill-founded. The organ and its twin cases had to be taken down to provide access to the piers in that area, and a very melancholy sight it was, with everything removed except a couple of supports for the upper casework which protruded forlornly from the wall.<sup>2</sup> In the expectation that the temporary arrangements might continue for some time, it seemed worthwhile to re-erect most of it in the north aisle of the Nave, with Wren's casework somewhat incongruously enclosing the Duke of Wellington's monument: the work was completed by the autumn of 1926, and to everyone's relief the instrument seemed to sound almost as good as ever in its unfamiliar position, apart from some weakness in the Pedal Organ, only a few of whose stops had been transplanted.<sup>3</sup>

Macpherson would have been relieved to have the Grand Organ to play upon once more, and to see the restoration of the Choral Eucharist on St Paul's Day 1927, albeit with an orchestra and choir reduced in size 'to match the condition of the building.'<sup>4</sup> His sudden death on 28 May was a shock to everyone including the Dean: 'Our organist, Charles Macpherson, an admirable choir trainer, fell down dead in the street.

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Alcock, 'Charles Macpherson as I knew him,' *The Rotunda* Vol. 2, No. 1 (September 1927), 8

<sup>2</sup> St Paul's Cathedral Library: photographs in 'Cathedral Reconstruction' file

<sup>3</sup> Reginald Whitworth, 'The Re-build on Ludgate Hill,' *The Rotunda*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 43ff

<sup>4</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 9 October 1926



He was a loyal friend, and I shall miss him very much.’<sup>5</sup> His compositions have not worn well, apart from a *Fantasie-Prelude* for organ and the *Service in E* for men’s voices: *O praise God in his holiness* was revived for the 1997 Diocesan Choirs’ Festival at St Paul’s, but seemed weak and pedestrian. The 1300th Anniversary of York Minster was celebrated in 1927 with his *Communion Service in E* flat ‘then considered the grandest,...replete with trumpets and drums:’<sup>6</sup> it fell from grace so quickly that in the 1930s Dean Bate banned it from the Minster, much to Bairstow’s chagrin.

One product of the close friendship between Bairstow and Macpherson was a pointed psalter:

The movement towards speech rhythm in psalm-singing to anglican chants threw up several versions of pointing, each in its own style. In the nineteen-twenties, Robert Bridges the Poet Laureate joined forces with Sir Walford Davies, Steuart Wilson and others to produce *The Psalter Newly Pointed*. Bairstow, Percy Buck and Charles Macpherson were anxious that their *English Psalter* should be first in the field, so a race was joined in which the latter narrowly won....Its main aim was to distribute the words more evenly through the chant, rather than putting all but the last 3 (or 5) syllables on to the reciting note. It was an interesting idea and was, no doubt, expected to provide the ultimate and complete cure for the thumping of the ending of each half verse as in the old system. This it certainly achieved but, overstepping the mark as it did, had the opposite effect of encouraging gabble as in verses like the fourth of Psalm 1:

*and look, whatso | ever . he | doeth . it shall | prosper*

the first of the *Venite*:

*let us heartily re|joice . in the | strength of . our sal | vation*

or verse 8 of Psalm 7

*and ac | cording . to the | innocency . that is | in me*

in all of which the first barline is placed a whole bar earlier than had hitherto been the practice. It all became too easy, and choirs could only with difficulty be restrained from adopting too rapid a pace. Looking back at the ‘old’ pointing – *The Cathedral Psalter* – it could be seen that there was basically little wrong with it, and that the successful new versions were merely more or less modifications of it.<sup>7</sup>

The current use at St Paul’s is identical with the first two examples, but prefers a simpler version of the third, as if to prove that like many revolutionaries the *English Psalter* had good ideas but went slightly too far.<sup>8</sup> It was certainly too revolutionary for the conditions at St Paul’s in 1925, the year of its publication. A few years later Marchant and the Succentor produced the *St Paul’s Cathedral Psalter*<sup>9</sup> whose distinctly

<sup>5</sup> W. R. Inge *op. cit.* 28 May 1927

<sup>6</sup> Jackson *op. cit.* 139

<sup>7</sup> Jackson *op. cit.* 276-7

<sup>8</sup> John Scott (ed.), *The New St Paul’s Cathedral Psalter* (London: Dean & Chapter of St Paul’s, 1997), 1, 11, 311

<sup>9</sup> Maurice F. Foxell & Stanley Marchant, *The St. Paul’s Cathedral Psalter* (London: Novello, 1935)

old-fashioned appearance seems all too typical of the cathedral's music at that time: 'At first sight the pointing seems retrogressive. But...it must be admitted that within its limits the system makes as little concession as possible to bad rhythms.'<sup>10</sup>

Whatever his limitations as a composer – and it is significant that few of his anthems lasted more than a few years in the repertoire at St Paul's apart from *Jesu, star of consolation*, which is still in use - Macpherson had been a dedicated and capable servant of the cathedral, possibly shortening his life thereby. Sir Walter Alcock paid him this tribute:

Macpherson was admirable at rehearsal, and I often saw him at the boys' practices. He threw his whole heart into the work, from the preliminary scales and exercises (with his amazing accompaniment) to the smallest detail of service music. He knew exactly what he wanted, and always secured it. His capacity for eliminating small mistakes in details of tone, values, diction etc., was great. The boys loved him and cheerfully accepted his every criticism, doing their best to mould themselves to his teaching. At a rehearsal of the Festival Choir he knew how to express himself in an encouraging way, and could if occasion demanded be caustic and convincing.<sup>11</sup>

The Sub-Organist, Stanley Marchant, was promoted to succeed him within a month of his death, and Douglas Hopkins, the Organist of Christ Church, Newgate Street, and a former chorister of the cathedral, was appointed Sub-Organist: the tradition seemed to be secured for another generation.<sup>12</sup>

It would in any case have been necessary to do some work on the organ before very long: a contemporary guide-book says that in its 1925 condition, prior to being dismantled, it

suffers from two little troubles. Firstly, the greater portion of the pedal organ and some of the tubas being in the north-east quarter dome, their pipes have had to be arranged to speak a trifle earlier than those in the quire so that the sounds may coincide, but as, in addition to this, there is a nine seconds echo from the said pedal organ and lack of sufficient power from the hydraulic machinery, the use of these stops is not encouraged. Secondly, behind the stalls on the north side there had to be buried, for the sake of appearance, the solo organ, in consequence of which...it is useless as regards accompanimental *support* of the choir, though...it is pretty generally admitted that the voicing of the seven reeds in this department has never been surpassed even if equalled.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Armstrong, 'Singing the Psalms', *English Church Music*, July 1935, 71-2

<sup>11</sup> *The Rotunda*, September 1927, 8

<sup>12</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 18 & 25 June 1927

<sup>13</sup> S. A. Warner, *St Paul's Cathedral* (London: SPCK, 1926), 86

Some preparations must have been in hand before the organ was taken down, for when re-erected in the nave it had a new five-manual console, electro-pneumatic action and electric blowing. Within four years it was back where it belonged: at first Chapter wished to defer the improvements to the dome divisions, for which provision had been made at the new console, but only a week later it was agreed that they could go ahead.<sup>14</sup> The most striking addition was a 'Trompette Militaire,' the gift of the organ-builder Henry Willis III: it was supposed to reproduce the tone of the French cavalry trumpet, and has spun-brass resonators specially obtained from Boosey and Hawkes. With its new action and blowing-plant the instrument was much more reliable and responsive, but perpetuated the many unsatisfactory aspects of the 1900 rebuild:

Dr Bridge at Westminster Abbey had had a fifth manual added to the organ there, to perform on some sort of tubular bells, fixed I believe in the south transept of the Abbey known as Poet's Corner, and because of this it was thought well that the St Paul's organ should have five rows of keys as well. This greatly incensed "Father Willis," and he said one day to me, "They *will* have five rows because of that thing at the Abbey, and it's *one too many!*"

At St Paul's Cathedral, in the end of the nineties, this reconstruction (for such it amounts to) and addition took much time and cost much money. A very beautiful 32ft. reed on the pedal, which could be used with the full swell *only* without overpowering it, was got rid of (Why? one may ask), and the organist made thoroughly uncomfortable, as the present writer can most feelingly testify. Then, to skip to today, further "additions" were of course looked upon as essential, with the result that if anything approaching the full power of the organ be used it would fill the building if the nave were carried down to, say, St Martin's Church (midway up Ludgate Hill).<sup>15</sup>

Macpherson's death severed one link with the days of Stainer and Martin: it was closely followed by the illness and death of William Alfred Frost, the last survivor of the Assistant Vicars-Choral appointed in 1873, whose published memoirs are indispensable to any historian of this period. He was first granted extended leave, and then replaced by a permanent deputy, the cathedral allowing him a donation of £25 p.a. and a pension of £150 until his death on 18 May 1929.<sup>16</sup> The Dean and Chapter's concern for their employees is also evident at the sudden illness of Tom Purvis, a relative newcomer: they agreed to pay half his deputy's fees and to consider granting him money.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 22 & 29 June 1929

<sup>15</sup> 'St Paul's Cathedral from 1871,' *Musical Opinion*, August 1931, 967

<sup>16</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 24 September 1929, 28 March, 9 & 23 June 1928; 26 May 1929

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* 10 December 1927

A new Canon-Precentor, W. H. Elliott, joined the Chapter in 1928. His predecessor Canon Simpson had refused to attend any Chapter meetings, but Elliott took rather more interest in the Cathedral's business: 'The Precentor (Canon Elliott) Succentor and Organist [are] to discuss their respective duties in connection with the discipline and music of the choir, and present to chapter any conclusion at which they might arrive.'<sup>18</sup> They acted swiftly, presenting their conclusion within three months:

1. The Office of Precentor was not merely nominal. He was responsible for the well-being of the choir: he should correct the behaviour of Vicars-Choral and Assistant Vicars-Choral and if necessary make a report to Chapter.
2. His duties as regards music were mainly delegated to the Succentor.
3. The Succentor and Organist were to consult the Precentor as necessary: he was their link with Chapter.
4. The Precentor should get to know the choir.
5. The Precentor was to represent the Dean and Chapter on musical occasions e. g. rehearsals of the Special Choir.<sup>19</sup>

This hardly appears a striking result from three months' deliberation, but at least it gave the musicians an official representative in chapter. It was thus all the more disappointing that Elliott found the atmosphere within the Chapter so unpleasant that he resigned in 1930:<sup>20</sup> his influence may at least be traced in the arrangements for the re-opening of the cathedral, but his successor Oliver Quick soon departed to a Professorial Canonry at Durham, and it was the Succentor, the long-serving M. F. Foxell, who was consulted by Chapter in yet another revision of the regulations for the Assistant Vicars-Choral, the cathedral's dealings with the BBC, and the appointment of a new Organist and Headmaster in the mid 1930s.

1930 seemed to promise a fresh start, not only with the great celebrations marking the re-opening of the dome area to public worship, but in the passage through Parliament of a Cathedrals Measure (enacted in 1931) that at last promised the end of all freeholds, though existing office-holders were permitted to serve out their time, so that the process would inevitably be somewhat protracted. The ensuing revision of the statutes took some four years: whilst the ultimate aim of the exercise was to create a body of eighteen Vicars-Choral who would all receive the same salary of £200 p.a., and

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.* 23 March 1929

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* 27 July 1929

<sup>20</sup> W. R. Matthews and W. M. Atkins (eds.), *A History of St Paul's Cathedral and the Men Associated with It* (London: Phoenix, 1957), 299

all retire at the age of 60 on a pension of £100 p.a., it was necessary to secure the rights not only of the last six freeholders, Messrs Dutton, Stubbs, Taylor, Marriott, Brierley and Collett, who were the Vicars-Choral as of January 1931, but also to compensate the twelve Assistant Vicars-Choral then in post for the loss of the freehold to which they might have expected to succeed, with its right to a full salary until death. It was eventually agreed that when vacancies occurred in the office of any of the above-mentioned six Vicars-Choral they would be filled from among these twelve at a salary of £210, i.e. an increase of £10: their contributions to the old pension fund would be returned together with compound interest at two-and-a-half percent, and their pension on retirement would likewise be increased by £10. The stated aim of creating a uniform choir was thus some way short of being attained, as for some time to come the seniors would continue to enjoy certain privileges, albeit on a much reduced scale: several were still in the choir some twenty years later.<sup>21</sup>

There was also conflict between the Dean and Chapter's desire to restore certain obligations of attendance which had fallen into abeyance during the restoration works - 'the attention of the Lay Clerks (*sic*) is to be drawn to the fact that they can be called without fee to any special service by the Dean and Chapter'<sup>22</sup> - and the desire of the younger men, such as Purvis, to take lucrative outside engagements such as performances of the Bach *Passions* on Good Friday afternoon: in this instance Chapter gave way and agreed 'to omit the service from the list of those at which deputies are forbidden,'<sup>23</sup> perhaps in tacit recognition of the fact that the salary was no longer worth as much as before the Great War and it was no longer politic to enforce contractual demands quite so strictly. There had been no weekday morning services for the five years of the dome's closure, and the choirmen had found other use for the time. It was impressive and commendable that the full programme of services was restored in 1930, but it proved increasingly difficult to enforce attendance: 'It was agreed that from September 1<sup>st</sup> gentlemen on duty in verse weeks must be present in person on duty days or provide a cathedral deputy, responsible for verse and solo work.'<sup>24</sup> Purvis, who was

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<sup>21</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 16 June 1934

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* 31 May 1930

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.* 29 April 1934

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* 18 May 1935

rapidly assuming the position of 'shop steward,' even tried to obtain permission for verse singers to appear by deputy on Sundays, but not surprisingly this was refused.<sup>25</sup>

The restoration of daily sung morning services in 1930 was in many respects surprising, and may owe something to Dean Inge's dislike of innovation, for the trend of the times was towards their reduction or outright abolition, as the Dean of Chester recommended:

The choir boys would get the morning for their lessons as they ought to do and the lay clerks, for the work they ought in most cases to have in addition to their cathedral services. I cannot think that it is good for either the choir boys or the lay clerks to have to attend as many services as they do at present in most cathedrals. At least for the boys one sung service on week-days is quite as much as is good for them.<sup>26</sup>

At least there was to be some lightening of the Victorian gloom of Lent and Advent, with *Benedicite* confined to Septuagesima Sunday and to Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent, *Te Deum* now being sung at all other times: but a plea for some modest liturgical updating (such as including *Benedictus qui venit* and *Agnus Dei* in the Holy Communion) met with no sympathy on the Dean's part. 'The Minor Canons have sent us a long series of resolutions about the cathedral services, the cumulative effect of which would be to change the type of service which has always been maintained at St Paul's into one of a definitely 'catholic' type.'<sup>27</sup> His long reign was nearing its end, however, and he retired in September 1934.

His successor, Dean Matthews, was aware of the Cathedral's noble traditions, but felt that it was living too much on its past. 'The worship was beautiful and dignified; the music, under the direction of Dr Stanley Marchant, maintained the high standard which had been set by Stainer, Martin and Macpherson, [but] many felt a lack of warmth and fellowship in the services.'<sup>28</sup> He initiated some modest liturgical innovation, in the insertion of a break between Mattins and Holy Communion in the long Sunday morning service: it soon fell to him to appoint a new headmaster for the

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* 14 March 1936

<sup>26</sup> F. S. M. Bennett, *The Nature of a Cathedral* (Chester: Phillipson & Golder, 1925), 36

<sup>27</sup> Inge, *op. cit.* 144 (3 January 1930)

<sup>28</sup> Matthews and Atkins *op. cit.* 302-3

choir-school, and to break with the tradition of 'internal appointments' in the selection of a new organist.

The Reverend Reginald Henry Couchman, the former Principal of Exeter Diocesan Training College, had been a Minor Canon and the Master of the Choir School since 1914. After twenty years he wished to be relieved of his Minor Canonry, but it seemed inopportune to appoint a new headmaster until alterations to the choir-school had been carried out, and his term of office was twice extended before he finally retired in the summer of 1937.<sup>29</sup> There is anecdotal evidence that discipline among the older choristers (who at this time were sometimes as old as fifteen years) had grown rather slack: in his successor, the Revd A. Jessop Price, the Dean and Chapter found a disciplinarian of awesome reputation. His reform of the school extended to such details as the choristers' uniform: 'the headmaster attended [Chapter] and produced a boy in a flannel suit with shorts,' which were to replace Etons on weekdays except Saints' days; bigger boys were to wear trousers. Ruffs were also to replace Eton collars, and a fortnight later, the Chancellor having expressed a wish for gowns and mortar boards, 'a chorister, wearing a gown, was viewed, and the costume was approved.'<sup>30</sup> An inspection of the school by the Ministry of Education was made the following year.

The new Dean had already appointed a new Organist. Marchant was becoming seriously affected by arthritis, and resigned in 1936 to become Principal of the Royal Academy of Music: he was knighted in 1943 and died in 1949.<sup>31</sup> His obituary records that after a notable career as a boy soprano, including an appearance at the Hereford Three Choirs Festival, he won the John Goss Scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music, where he

arrested the attention of Sir George Martin, who cordially invited him to St Paul's. This resulted in his being asked to play the voluntary, then the whole service, Sir George taking notes as a member of the congregation!...In 1903 he became organist of Christ Church, Newgate Street, and many and various Services were played at St Paul's by him during this period....In 1916 Marchant almost automatically became Sub-Organist and Master of the Choristers at St Paul's. Then followed a tragedy in the early and lamented death of Macpherson. The Dean and Chapter realizing Marchant's exceptional intimacy with the music of the Cathedral appointed him, the 'Goss Scholar', to add his name to his eminent

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<sup>29</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 30 December 1933, 5 January 1935

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* 16, 30 April 1938

<sup>31</sup> H. C. Colles, 'Stanley Marchant,' *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, Vol. xi, 658

predecessors: Goss, Stainer, Martin and Macpherson. The grand traditions of St Paul's were more than maintained by him.<sup>32</sup>

His time as Organist had been short but eventful. He had written a Te Deum in D for the re-opening of the Cathedral in 1930; he had given recitals on the restored organ, and one had been broadcast by the BBC on 18 May 1935,<sup>33</sup> and the BBC had also made a gramophone record of the service for the King's Silver Jubilee on 6 May 1935,<sup>34</sup> to which Marchant contributed another Te Deum, in G this time, whose somewhat negative qualities of brevity and simplicity brought it a popularity denied to its complicated but uninspired forerunner (Ex. 19). Of his other compositions, *The souls of the righteous* and *Judge eternal, throned in splendour* (written for men's voices but published in a version for full choir) were widely used: *Ye Holy Angels Bright*, written for the 1925 Festival of the Sons of the Clergy, was favourably received as 'a welcome addition to the repertory of good choirs. It contains some skilful and highly effective writing for the voices.'<sup>35</sup>

Regular Sunday evening broadcasts to the Empire were being made from the cathedral, and when the organ at Westminster Abbey was taken down for rebuilding in 1936 the BBC asked St Paul's to take over the Abbey's weekly broadcasts of Evensong. The first from St Paul's duly took place on 8 July 1936: they continued (with intervals) until 1939. Thus the music of St Paul's was reaching a wider public, and seemed to be well regarded: Marchant must have expected the customary 'rule of succession' to apply when he resigned, and he urged the appointment of his assistant, Douglas Hopkins.

However, the Succentor and the soon-to-retire Headmaster, having some personal reservations about Hopkins, were equally determined that an appointment be made from outside.<sup>36</sup> There is a hint also that the cathedral's music had its critics: a regular worshipper was moved to write in complaint of the music, especially that on Christmas Day 1935, and Dean Matthews and the Precentor undertook to discuss it with the Succentor. It seemed necessary at least to consider seeking a new organist elsewhere,

<sup>32</sup> H. W. Richards, 'Sir Stanley Marchant 1883-1949,' *The Musical Times* April 1949, 105-6

<sup>33</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 28 March 1935

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* 23 March 1935, 18 January 1936

<sup>35</sup> *The Musical Times*, August 1925, 704

<sup>36</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 4 July 1936: also information supplied by Derek Perry, former chorister



**Example 19**  
Marchant : *Te Deum* in D

poco rit. **D** a tempo (crotchet beat)

The A - pos-tles praise Thee;

The A - pos-tles praise Thee; The

The glo-rious com-pan - y of the A - pos-tles praise

a tempo (crotchet beat)

The Pro-phets praise Thee. The no - ble army of Mar - tyr

The Pro-phets praise Thee. The Mar - tyr

good-ly fel - low - ship of the Pro-phets praise Thee, praise

Thee, praise Thee.

poco rit. Man. **E** allargando

praise Thee: The Ho - ly Church throughout all the world doth ac-

Thee: The Ho - ly Church throughout all the world doth ac-

Thee: The Ho - ly Church throughout all the world doth ac-

The Ho - ly Church throughout all the world doth ac-

poco rit. allargando

Gt. Ped.

and after examination of various testimonials Chapter decided to interview Hopkins, Thomas Armstrong and Harold Darke; but none of these seemed quite right, and the appointment went to John Dykes Bower, Organist of Durham Cathedral, who was apparently 'head-hunted' and added to the list at the last minute, Armstrong being the second choice. Dykes Bower was but thirty-one years old, but had already been organist of Truro Cathedral (1926-9) and New College, Oxford (1929-33) before Durham (1933-6). The Dean received 'favourable letters' about the appointment.<sup>37</sup>

It is easy and convenient to make comparisons between Durham and St Paul's from this time to the end of the period under discussion, since both, unlike many other cathedrals, have kept complete collections of service-sheets: but the comparison also has a certain validity in that in both establishments a new Dean appointed Dykes Bower to break a long tradition of appointments from within the cathedral staff. At Durham his predecessor was The Revd Arnold Culley who had added the duties of organist to his existing title of Precentor in 1907, and at St Paul's he succeeded the last representative of a sixty years' succession of organists. At both cathedrals he inherited an assistant who may have had hopes of inheriting the organistship: his successor at Durham (who at Wells had also followed a Precentor-organist) was likewise a late entrant into the field, and this time the assistant had virtually been promised his job.<sup>38</sup> The new organists of Durham and St Paul's began their duties in the autumn of 1936, retiring in 1974 and 1968 respectively, so first-hand memories of both are plentiful. The Organist's name appears on the service-lists at Durham Cathedral: at St Paul's to this day only the Succentor's name is appended. Both cathedrals are big, with the quire open to the nave, and their choirs are large: that at Durham had usually been better-paid than most cathedral choirs outside London. The choir of St Paul's sang Mattins daily and the Holy Communion every Sunday: at Durham Mattins was sung only on Sunday and two weekdays, and the Holy Communion only once a month and on great festivals, though Mattins was sung in addition on Saints' days. At St Paul's some part at least of the choir was on duty every day of the year, but several weeks of the year were without music at Durham, except for occasional visits from parish choirs. These many similarities and several differences have prompted the inclusion of two samples of the

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<sup>37</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 11, 18, 25 July 1936

<sup>38</sup> Information supplied by Dr Brian Crosby

Durham repertoire in Appendices 7-12; 1931-2, the years immediately prior to Dykes Bower's appointment to Durham, and the twelve months in 1935-6 before his move to St Paul's.

The 1931-2 sample for St Paul's (twelve months, Easter to Easter, as usual) reveals that the cathedral had come to subsist on an even more limited repertory: the weekday morning services, re-introduced completely and suddenly straight after the re-opening of the cathedral in 1930, were being sustained with a relatively limited selection of canticle-settings, most of the Victoriana having disappeared, whereas Durham was not only continuing to enjoy Calkin and E. J. Hopkins but was also using services by Brewer, Noble and Stanford, and no fewer than three by Walford Davies, that were unheard at St Paul's. On the other hand St Paul's had taken up Vaughan Williams' fine *Te Deum in G* as soon as it was published, and the Communion Service in F by Harold Darke, both to this day quite indispensable. There is a curious lack of correspondence between the two cathedrals' Communion settings, Durham tending to prefer more austere products: their Evensong repertory had more in common, the music of Charles Wood being represented at St Paul's at last. A smaller number of anthems was being sung at St Paul's at a greater number of services than at Durham, whose choir was singing a much more extensive selection of anthems; though as York was chosen rather than Durham for weekly broadcasts in the early '30s it is conceivable that performance standards were not as high. Durham had never discarded the works of the 'old school,' and a wide selection of eighteenth-century verse anthems could be heard: the continued use of anthems by Spohr and Gounod gave the music lists a somewhat dated appearance, as did the absence of any sign of the 'Tudor revival.'

On the credit side, St Paul's had used the extra rehearsal time during the suspension of sung morning services to introduce some new Communion Services of quality, notably the English versions of Byrd's Masses and Vaughan Williams' *Mass in G minor*, though the latter took most of 1926 to learn, being replaced by *Stanford in B flat* on its first scheduled appearance (18 July) but finally being performed on 19 December 1926, typical caution on Macpherson's part. Byrd (5 voices), Vaughan Williams and Macpherson (E flat) were chosen for the three great thanksgiving services on 26, 27 and 28 June 1930, and Marchant's specially composed *Te Deum* in D with brass and drums was given its first performance at the re-opening of the cathedral on 25 June,

which was attended by the King, Queen, Prince of Wales and Prime Minister. The choir's performance of Bach's *Mass in B minor* on 3 July was enthusiastically received.

The anthems of Barnby, Garrett, Gounod, E J Hopkins, Spohr and Sullivan, still in regular use at Durham, had been completely discarded at St Paul's by now; Mendelssohn had suffered a severe pruning, and hardly any Goss and Stainer remained. New works were relatively few in number, but proved to be of enduring quality; three anthems of Bairstow, some more Byrd, anthems by Mundy, Peter Philips, Stanford and Whitlock may be singled out, though all are of relatively small scale: Mr Baldwin was not the only proponent of 'safety first.'

What qualities could Dykes Bower bring to this situation, and how much freedom would he have in his choice of music? Was the Succentor still to be in firm control of the daily repertory? His three years at Durham provide vital clues: he was regarded there as 'a breath of fresh air,' and his first Head Chorister, Gordon Berriman, recalled not only the introduction of new music but also a greater finesse in performance, with greater attention to blend, phrasing and dynamics, though he added that the first time the choir sang both verses of *Jesu, joy of man's desiring* was also the last, one verse henceforth being considered quite enough for anyone.<sup>39</sup> The lay-clerks considered him 'a gentleman,' because he allowed them to sing solos in their own way, as compared with his successor who tried to bring them to heel; which may or may not be thought a compliment!<sup>40</sup>

His predecessor had chosen the music as both Precentor and Organist, and thus it seemed natural that the new Organist should exercise considerable influence in the choice of Durham Cathedral's music, a kind of reform by accident. He took full advantage of this freedom, and effected a complete transformation of the choir's repertory, discarding what was now unfashionable (the weaker products of the eighteenth century and the 'sentimental' Victorians) and seeking replacements from the 'Tudors' and the present day. The result was an expression of current standards of good taste: the verse anthems of the 'old school' of Boyce, Croft and Greene were largely but by no means totally ignored, most periods of composition were represented, and a handful of anthems to Latin texts came into use, including Samuel Wesley's *In exitu*

<sup>39</sup> Conversations with the late Canon G. R. Berriman

<sup>40</sup> Information supplied by Dr Brian Crosby

*Israel* and Stanford's *Beati quorum via* and *Iustorum animae*. The latter's *O living will* was quite a favourite, as indeed were other works of Stanford and Wood, including all the former's well-known Services and the latter's Evening Services in C minor, D, E flat (Nos. 1 & 2), F and G: the inclusion of Howells in G and Parry in D (No. 2) is also to be noted.

The similarity between the music of Durham in 1936 and St Paul's in 1939 is striking indeed, and compelling evidence that by now, if not earlier, the choice of music had *de facto* if not *de jure* passed from Succentor to Organist: whether Dykes Bower had been able to stipulate such an arrangement as a condition of his accepting the post can only be a matter for conjecture. Naturally enough, he retained items from the existing repertory which were acceptable but happened not to have been in the Durham library, and the impracticality of solo or verse anthems for conditions at St Paul's was acknowledged, but quite a sizeable portion of the Durham favourites seemed to have come south with him, such as *Noble in B minor* (Morning), *Stanford in A* (Morning and Communion) and *Stanford in G* (Communion), and anthems by Bairstow (*Blessed city, heavenly Salem* and *Jesu, grant me this, I pray*), Stanford (*O living will*) and Wood (*O thou the central Orb*). The revival of Maurice Greene's *God is our hope and strength* seemed to atone in a small way for the cathedral's neglect of the eighteenth century: even more remarkably the same composer's *Lord, let me know mine end*, newly edited by Bullock, the organist of Westminster Abbey, now appeared in the printed music schemes for the very first time, for though sung at Nelson's funeral it does not seem to have featured in the cathedral's day-to-day services. Marchant's dull *Te Deum* in D had been replaced by the slightly better one in G, and the singing of Parry's *Jerusalem* as an anthem seemed to give tongue to patriotic sentiment on appropriate occasions. Stainer and his contemporaries had suffered virtual oblivion: not even *I saw the Lord* survived.

Certain anthems were now being sung to the original Latin texts, an innovation that must have seemed striking to regular worshippers, though there seemed no consistent policy in this regard; *Dixit Maria ad angelum* (Hassler) and Byrd's *Iustorum animae* rubbed shoulders with the latter's *O Christ who art the light and day* and Palestrina's *Thou art Peter*. The contemporary taste for austerity found expression in Wood's Communion Service in the Ionian Mode, in Fauxbourdon settings of the evening canticles adapted from Andreas and Fayrfax and in a modern re-creation of the form by Harold Darke (in A minor): at 'men-only' services plainsong, perhaps decked out with

the occasional fa-burden, was virtually the sole diet for the canticles, relieved by more colourful fare only on Sundays during the choristers' holidays; and even then the Holy Communion was nearly always sung to *Merbecke*. In this respect the Durham repertory had been far more interesting, but Durham did not have to contend with the peculiar workings of the St Paul's duty rota and deputy system, and plainsong was surely the safest option in the face of the 'growing difficulty with attendance owing to the call of the BBC.'<sup>41</sup>

It was inevitable that the younger and more able men were finding it hard to resist the well-paid and artistically rewarding work now offered by the BBC. When reconstructing the choir in 1873 the Dean and Chapter had treated its members as virtually full-time employees, with strictly limited entitlement to holidays, and subject to stringent conditions as to the kind of outside work they could undertake: an Assistant Vicar-Choral was quite well paid, a Vicar-Choral handsomely so. In 1936 the duties were much the same, or possibly more onerous now that the boys had longer holidays, but the emoluments had not kept pace; nor were deputies plentiful, for their maximum number at any time in the 1930s was forty-four, whereas the 1998 list contains three times as many to cover a greatly reduced workload. If the absence of certain members was irritating, the continued presence of others seemed intolerable, and the two most elderly tenors, Brierley and Collett, were induced to accept a pension of £210 p.a., almost the amount of their full salary, and resigned their freeholds from Michaelmas 1937. Another elderly Vicar-Choral, Marriott, died in 1938 after forty-six years' service, but the sole remaining freeholder, his octogenarian alto colleague Henry Dutton, proved impossible to dislodge, though he was in trouble that year:

Mr Dutton and Mr Marsters attended with regard to a personal dispute between them which had been brought to the notice of the Chapter. After an appeal from the Dean they each agreed to forget the past and then shook hands.<sup>42</sup>

It is tempting to surmise that Victor Marsters, a fellow alto, was objecting to doing Dutton's work as well as his own!

The new tenors were Alfred Hepworth, who later moved to Westminster Abbey, and the splendidly-named Alpha Newby who gave long service to St Paul's. The

<sup>41</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 31 October 1936

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.* 30 April 1938



baritone Gordon Clinton, who became a renowned soloist and teacher and ultimately Principal of the Birmingham School of Music, joined the choir at the same time;<sup>43</sup> and Marriott's replacement was Lambert Wilkinson, who sang *Sound the trumpet* with Alfred Deller in the inaugural concert of the BBC Third Programme on 29 September 1946.<sup>44</sup> The men's average age was lower than it had been for some time, and their standard higher: the new organist was also anxious to improve the choristers' routine, giving Chapter 'his views about choristers' hours of work and probationers' holidays.'<sup>45</sup> He also gave his views on an increase in his own salary, and was rewarded with another £50 p.a. from 1 January 1939.<sup>46</sup>

The choir had sung at the Coronation in 1937, and at a concert in Westminster Abbey on June 21 1938 during the National Festival of Modern Music. A London Music Festival in the spring of 1939, an elaborate affair which included excursions to hear special church music at Cambridge, Oxford, Canterbury and Windsor, culminated in a concert at St Paul's in which the cathedral choir was joined by those of Westminster Abbey, the Chapel Royal and the Temple Church to give a programme entitled 'Four Centuries of Cathedral Music.'<sup>47</sup> Dykes Bower and Ernest Bullock (Westminster Abbey) conducted the choirs in *Hosanna to the Son of David* (Weelkes), *Remember not, Lord, our offences* (Purcell), *O clap your hands together* (Greene), *In exitu Israel* (Samuel Wesley) and *Hail, gladdening light* (Wood): the omission of the late nineteenth-century will be noted as typical of current taste. The concert was broadcast, and thus the technology of the day was being applied to the cathedral's traditional musical institutions, just as it had been to the reinforcement of the cathedral's structure: both seemed to have been strengthened and secured for the future, with the choir re-invigorated and brought up to date in its personnel (with exceptions) and its music. The choristers departed for their summer holidays on 23 July and returned as normal on 27 August: on 3 September, in anticipation of the declaration of war against

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<sup>43</sup> *ibid.* 26 June, 24 July 1937

<sup>44</sup> Michael and Mollie Hardwick, *Alfred Deller, A Singularity of Voice* (London: Proteus, 1980), 100

<sup>45</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 28 May 1938

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.* 8 October, 10 December 1938

<sup>47</sup> *English Church Music* July 1939, 67; *Musical Times* June 1939, 448.

## CHAPTER 7 : FUTURE SAFETY ASSURED? (1925-39)

Nazi Germany, they made a hasty departure for Truro. It was to be 1945 before they sang regularly in St Paul's once again.



## ‘WE SHALL ALL MEET TO CATCH THE 9.05 TO PADDINGTON’<sup>1</sup> (1939-45)

The Organist reviewed the work of the Choir School at Truro and in London during the last six years, and during an interesting speech expressed the opinion that had the Choir School not been kept in existence ten years’ work would have been required before the school could again have been brought to the perfection which it now is.<sup>2</sup>

The boys’ evacuation to Truro Cathedral School<sup>3</sup> was part of H. M. Government’s scheme to remove the population of large cities to places of safety, and the West Country was a favoured destination. In the late summer of 1939, now that war seemed imminent, the Dean and Chapter had resolved ‘to carry on services unless the government decided otherwise,’<sup>4</sup> for there were rumours that the cathedral might be closed completely as part of measures to discourage the assembly of large numbers of people. A proposal to disband the choir-school was debated by Chapter, but rejected ‘on the ground that this would be a serious break in the musical tradition.’<sup>5</sup> The removal of the choristers to Truro, where the Cathedral School had offered hospitality, seemed to take them by surprise, and it does not appear to have been Dykes Bower’s idea, despite his past association with Truro: all the evidence is that he was unhappy with the arrangement, for in the first months of the ‘phoney war’ he and Ernest Bullock (Organist of Westminster Abbey) and Sydney Nicholson (Director of the School of

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<sup>1</sup> The Revd A. Jessop Price, Headmaster of St Paul’s Cathedral Choir School, as recalled by Derek Perry, Chorister 1942-47

<sup>2</sup> *Chapter Minutes*, 25 January 1946

<sup>3</sup> Truro Cathedral School was always called ‘Truro School’ by the authorities at St Paul’s, and their usage is followed in this chapter. It should not be confused with the other independent school in Truro, correctly entitled ‘Truro School.’

<sup>4</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 26 August 1939

<sup>5</sup> Matthews and Atkins *op. cit.* 315

English Church Music) approached Chapter with the proposal that the St Paul's boys be lodged instead in the School of English Church Music's premises at Chislehurst, Kent, along with the Abbey choristers who had been evacuated to Christ's Hospital at Horsham.<sup>6</sup> It was decided to continue the current arrangements until the following Easter, but discussion continued intermittently throughout the early months of 1940, and Dykes Bower again asked 'if anything could be done about bringing choirboys back to London.'<sup>7</sup> The arrangement was proving expensive, and Chapter was glad to accept Truro School's offer to pay £40 per term towards Jessop Price's salary, as it more or less offset the loss of £10 per month being incurred by the Choir School.<sup>8</sup> A proposal that the boys return to St Paul's for three weeks at Easter had to be abandoned, but they were back for the services on Sunday 7 April and sang at Evensong on the next three days, finishing their stay with a concert on 12 April.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile the Precentor, Canon Cockin, had visited Truro 'to investigate the financial arrangements so far agreed to.'<sup>10</sup> The result of his investigations led Chapter to re-open the question of housing the boys at Chislehurst, and Cockin was despatched to Truro once more to discuss 'terms for a withdrawal.'<sup>11</sup> He reported to Chapter on 30 March. There was a desire to have the boys back in London, so the Dean undertook to ask permission of the Government authorities for their return: if this were granted, their parents would be asked whether they preferred them to live at Chislehurst or back in London at the Choir School; though the Organist and Headmaster would then have to inspect Chislehurst, and all before 13 April as Truro School had to be informed before 1 May. The Headmaster did not report until 20 April: what he then had to say put an end to any more notions of abandoning Truro, and the Dean undertook to explain the decision to the Organist.<sup>12</sup> Before long the war had taken a far more serious course: Kent was now just as dangerous as London, and the boys of Canterbury Cathedral had

<sup>6</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 4 November 1939

<sup>7</sup> *Executive Committee of the Church Music Society: Minutes* 11 April 1940 (RCO Library)

<sup>8</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*. 23 December 1939, 6, 20, 27 January 1940

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.* 23 March 1940

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* 24 February 1940

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.* 16 May 1940

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* 30 March, 20 April 1940

also fled to Cornwall, where they lived in a small hotel at St Blazey, near Par, and sang daily services in the parish church.<sup>13</sup> On more than one occasion they joined the St Paul's and Truro boys at the choristers' festival in Truro Cathedral.<sup>14</sup> By the year's end Dykes Bower was in the RAF, with Stanley Marchant recalled from retirement to play whenever the Sub-Organist was in Truro with the boys.<sup>15</sup>

There was a perceived threat to the very survival of the traditional cathedral choir:

In London and other big centres the position is tragic: for the first time for nearly three hundred years no boys' voices are to be heard at Westminster Abbey, St Paul's Cathedral, the Chapel Royal or the Temple; while most of the parish churches famed for their music are in a similar position. The same is the case at some of the provincial cathedrals; there are no boys at Manchester, Rochester or Portsmouth, and there may be others in similar case.

Admittedly this is a war-time necessity. In the last war circumstances led not to the dispersal of the boys, who in fact bore the brunt of the work, but to the curtailment of the regular daily choral services "as a war-time measure." *But they were never fully restored.* To think of the possibility of a similar happening with regard to the restoration of the boys and their choir-schools after this war must arouse feelings of dismay in all who value the best traditions of English church music.<sup>16</sup>

In the summer of 1940 there were rumours that at least three cathedrals were 'contemplating closing their choir schools as a measure of economy,'<sup>17</sup> and in such a climate the resolve of the Dean and Chapter to persevere with the arrangements at Truro showed that St Paul's could still set a standard for other cathedrals to emulate. In contrast, Westminster Abbey's choristers were disbanded in the autumn of that year.

The unpublished reminiscences of Derek Perry shed valuable light on war-time life at Truro, and at St Paul's in the early post-war years. He joined the choir in 1942, the purchase of his school uniform having required the pooling of the family's clothing coupons: each term he boarded the 'school special' which conveyed pupils of several Public Schools to their temporary locations in the west country, and after a journey of some eight hours he was faced with an uphill walk of a mile to Trewinnard Court, the boarding house and preparatory department of Truro School. Life improved when he

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<sup>13</sup> Gerald H. Knight, 'From Canterbury to Cornwall,' *English Church Music*, October 1940, 98

<sup>14</sup> *English Church Music*, January 1944, 4

<sup>15</sup> *English Church Music*, April 1941, 41

<sup>16</sup> *English Church Music*, January 1940, 3

<sup>17</sup> *English Church Music*, October 1940, 88

was old enough to be lodged with a family in the city, as at least he was properly fed after that.

His first teacher was 'a sour woman [who], along with a number of other staff, had a dislike and resentment of the St Paul's boys;' which perhaps may be explained if not excused by the fact that they had been imposed upon Truro by the government in the first place and remained there *faute de mieux*, the St Paul's authorities having made several attempts to move them elsewhere. Jessop Price's insistence on preserving their identity as a distinct group did not help matters: for example, choir practice was carefully timed so that they could not be selected for Truro School's sports teams. They were also so tactless as to do better in their schoolwork than the local boys.

After Dykes Bower had been called up and Hopkins (Sub-Organist) was left in sole charge in London, the day-to-day work with the boys was in the hands of Mr Sydney Lovett, who had been recalled from retirement after a long but somewhat ill-defined association with St Paul's. He was paid £100 p.a.,<sup>18</sup> and

was a journeyman musician who had the deplorable habit of clearing his throat, spitting the result out on the floor and rubbing it into the ground with the sole of his shoe. The musical highlight of each term in Truro was the week-long visit from Douglas Hopkins. I have, subsequently, sung under many conductors, none as inspirational as D. H. who was himself a former Head Boy of the school. This gave him a dramatic advantage over anyone else who had anything at all to do with the Choir School. He could sing well (which D[ykes] B[ower] could not); he was amusing and indiscreet. But, most of all, he knew what it was like.<sup>19</sup>

The boys did not sing with Truro Cathedral Choir, except on Sundays,<sup>20</sup> when they sat in the Canons' stalls *behind* the Truro lay-clerks. During the week the two cathedrals' choristers sang on different days, and the St Paul's repertory was kept alive after a fashion by having them sing the men's parts of full choir settings, transposed up an octave as necessary, though 'despite some ingenious ruses, largely on the part of D. H., it was impossible to perform much of the music sung in normal times. D. H. himself wrote a Mag. & Nunc. in four parts for boys' voices. It was very singable but dropped from the list at the end of the war.'<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 21 September 1940

<sup>19</sup> Perry, *op. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> Scott *op. cit.* 29 is typically misleading, in seeming to imply that they became part of the Truro choir.

<sup>21</sup> Perry, *op. cit.*

Great pains were taken to preserve the choir's traditions, even though numbers were much reduced:

The choristers – of whom there should have been thirty-two – had a hierarchy. On entry into their ranks I became a member of the back desk (about a third of the total of choristers.) There was also a middle desk, and a front desk, but these titles do not convey, of themselves, any special meaning – there were no specific desks at which one sat. The desk you were in, however, had real significance. First there were elections to the front desk, by the existing members of that desk, and to the middle desk by the front desk together with the existing middle desk members. The only electors were the relevant existing choristers and the only criterion for promotion was vocal contribution – which is more than singing ability. It's also to do with musicality, with co-operation and with confidence.... Apart from status – real enough in these circumstances – the big bonus was in reaching the front desk – eight members, who were allowed to take any hard-backed book into choir practice and read it after the choir-master announced "back desk and middle desk only," which he did frequently when a well-known piece was to be rehearsed. I moved to the middle desk in the summer of 1944 and to the front a year later.<sup>22</sup>

In all its essentials this is the system upon which the choir still functions today, though the boys no longer elect one another. All cathedral choirs have some sort of promotion structure, of course: the St Paul's model is peculiarly suited to the choir's uniquely large size, and may be assumed to have been devised in the 1870s when the choir was enlarged and the choir-school opened.

On occasion Jessop Price would speak of the choir's return to London. 'He would say, "One day, without warning, I will interrupt choir practice, and bring it to an end. You will all go back to your various houses, pack your belongings and make your farewells. We shall all meet at Truro station on the following morning in time to catch the 9.05 to Paddington." This was the dream for which we all longed.'<sup>23</sup> The choristers can have had but little idea of their Headmaster's anxieties meanwhile: he was encountering difficulties in taking his full share in the cathedral services at Truro, he had to supervise those boys lodging with families (he was authorised to raise their payment to 2/6d per week), and as the war dragged on he had to contend with parents who wished to withdraw their sons prematurely. In some measure of compensation, Truro School doubled his allowance after a visit from the Dean of St Paul's in March 1941, and he was allowed £20 p.a. for the use of his car.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile he was looking after the choir school and its equipment against the day when the choristers could return.

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<sup>22</sup> Perry *op.cit.*

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 29 March & 26 April 1941, 25 April & 9 September 1942, 5 May 1943

So precipitately had the choristers left St Paul's in September 1939 that no music had been chosen to cover their absence. On Sunday 3 September, the day that war was declared, the full services were sung by the vicars-choral, but there was no more music that week; the following week's list was hand-written, and then printed schemes appeared again, a surprisingly good quality of paper and printing being maintained right through the war. The Dean and Chapter had already drawn what precedent they could from the previous conflict:

Any men on national service will have their salary made up by the Dean and Chapter. If services are discontinued, the Dean and Chapter will try to pay those who have no other work, but would expect them to try to find work useful to the nation.<sup>25</sup>

As it turned out, there was not the same drain on manpower as in the Great War, but at least the boys had been available then to disguise the worst deficiencies: now services had to be maintained by the men alone. In the first months of the war their number remained remarkably complete: by November 1939 only one man, M. J. Miller (bass), had joined the armed forces and been replaced, in time-honoured fashion, by a 'permanent deputy.'<sup>26</sup> A silver plaque affixed to his desk in the *Decani* choir-stalls records Miller's death in action in 1941.

For ten months the Vicars-Choral faithfully sang the services, morning and evening, seven days a week, with no break apart from a week's holiday at the beginning of April 1940: that this was a sudden decision is obvious from the fact that the week's music had been chosen and the list published, but it is equally obviously connected with the boys' unexpected, if temporary, return from Truro in the following week.<sup>27</sup> Once it had finally been decided that the boys would be away from London for the foreseeable future, the Succentor and the Organist attended Chapter to discuss the problems now beginning to arise from the call-up of the younger men. The Dean agreed to write to the Ministry of Labour to see if they could join military units near London and sing on Sundays, or do some 'national work;' but despite a joint approach from St Paul's and

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* 26 August 1939

<sup>26</sup> *Gentlemen of the Choir, November 1939* – printed list in Succentor's office

<sup>27</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 23 March 1940; also *v. supra* p.105

the Abbey the request was turned down.<sup>28</sup> When the war took a more serious turn after Dunkirk it seemed sensible to reduce the men's duties, and from 15 July 1940 Mattins on all weekdays, and Evensong on Mondays, were deprived of any music.<sup>29</sup> The Succentor, only appointed in 1939, had joined the RAF as a chaplain, his responsibility for the choir devolving upon the Organist and Sub-Organist: some of the deputies appointed for choirmen in the armed forces were then called up in their turn; and one Vicar-Choral (Mercer) left for Huddersfield without informing the Organist, was 'written to' by the Precentor, and was then given permission to take up work in the War Reserve Police. The bass line was particularly affected, and there were several weeks when only a sole member, or two at most, remained on duty.<sup>30</sup> In an attempt to make the best of a bad job, it was decreed that Vicars-Choral could supply deputies on up to sixty days each year, including no more than eight Sundays, and the minimum requirement for weekdays was set as follows:

Basses – one Vicar-Choral or two deputies on each side, with a deputy never left on his own.

Tenors – one Vicar-Choral and one deputy each side.

Altos – two Vicars-Choral each side.

If he could not find a deputy, a Vicar-Choral should tell the [acting] Succentor after finding out how many other men of the same voice would be present.

The Succentor had gone to the RAF in the summer of 1940, soon followed by the Organist, who ended the war with the rank of Squadron Leader: it seemed all too likely that there might be no-one left to direct the music, for in May 1941 the Sub-Organist reported to Chapter that he had received a notice to register for military service. Chapter's request for his exemption was turned down by no less a person than Ernest Bevin himself, but Stanley Marchant's seemed to have more influence, for Hopkins' military service was deferred several times until the end of 1942 before the matter was quietly dropped. He may well have been found unfit for military service, as he was reported to be 'seriously ill' in the autumn of 1943,<sup>31</sup> or perhaps authority had decided

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* 4, 11, 18 May 1940

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* 6 July 1940

<sup>30</sup> *Attendance Registers*, 19 May-6 June 1943

<sup>31</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 30 November 1943

that the music of the nation's foremost cathedral was as vital to morale as CEMA<sup>32</sup> or the concerts of Dame Myra Hess and Sir Malcolm Sargent.<sup>33</sup>

The Sub-Organist was left to cope with the task of maintaining the services with a depleted group of men, whose day-to-day attendance might be unreliable for any number of pressing reasons. Simplicity had been the order of the day at the beginning of the war, with much unison singing and the almost invariable use of plainsong for the canticles on weekdays: the psalms were also to be plainsong, even on Sundays, though Anglican chant was to be used at special services.<sup>34</sup> Once the number of services had been reduced, there was practice time available to restore some of the harmonised settings formerly in use, and as the war drew on Douglas Hopkins exercised considerable ingenuity in finding new music, even if transposition or some re-arrangement might be involved:

The 'children of Paules' were sadly missed at the Cathedral services, but the men of the choir, their number sadly diminished at successive intervals by the call-up for the forces, showed that English church composers could provide some excellent music for men's voices only.<sup>35</sup>

By the end of hostilities the men's repertory was far more interesting than it had been for many years.<sup>36</sup>

The first warning of an air-raid came on the very day that war was declared,<sup>37</sup> to be followed by many more. Mattins on Sunday 25 August 1940 was interrupted by an air-raid, but everyone returned for Holy Communion after the 'all clear,' and there were other similar interruptions: after Evensong had been abandoned on two successive days<sup>38</sup> it was transferred to the Crypt, but on 10 October a bomb came through the roof above the High Altar, destroying Bodley's reredos and causing much other damage. For a while Evensong was sung in St Dunstan's chapel, a small space at the back of the

<sup>32</sup> Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts

<sup>33</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 10, 24, 31 May, 20 December 1941; 1 August 1942

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* 18 May 1940

<sup>35</sup> *St Paul's in War and Peace* (London: Times Publishing, 1960), 43

<sup>36</sup> Appendices 11-13

<sup>37</sup> *St Paul's in War and Peace*, 36

<sup>38</sup> 3, 4 October 1940; pencilled note in volume of Service Sheets



Cathedral near the North-West door, but from 16 November the crypt was back in use. At first it was the intention that the small organ, the 'Willis on wheels,' should be restored and placed in the crypt.<sup>39</sup> Dr Marchant, obviously still held in considerable respect at the cathedral, was asked to suggest various firms in addition to Willis: he and Hopkins advised that the main organ be covered up and the small one repaired. The former was dismantled for safe-keeping, but the latter's fate remained undecided for several months until the cathedral was damaged again. On 16 April 1941 a bomb hit the North Transept and penetrated the floor above the area where the pipes of the Grand Organ had been stored, burying them in rubble: it seemed best after this to keep the small organ 'upstairs' in the undamaged part of the cathedral, which Chapter was determined to re-open as soon as possible, and it was repaired at a cost of £28.8s.3d.<sup>40</sup> Dean Matthews' grand piano continued to be used for the services in the crypt, which continued meanwhile with little disruption, worshippers entering by the workmen's entrance.<sup>41</sup>

There was no thought of abandoning the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy, as the recipients of that ancient Charity were in at least as much need as ever. The previous year's festival had included an unaccompanied setting of the canticles and an anthem for unison voices with organ accompaniment;<sup>42</sup> now and for the rest of the war the men sang to the accompaniment of a string orchestra, in the Sub-Organist's arrangements and orchestrations of anthems by Boyce or Croft and settings by Macpherson and E. W. Naylor. The manuscript parts for these survive in the Cathedral Library, together with Hopkins' own Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in D minor, and thus the tradition of special music with orchestra was maintained, albeit on a much reduced scale.

Boys' voices were still to be heard in the cathedral from time to time:

On one Sunday in each month the choristers of St Mary's, Reigate are enjoying the privilege of singing for the regular cathedral Services, together with the Lay Clerks, at St. Paul's cathedral, during the absence of the regular choir men owing to evacuation. This plan has now been in operation for some months, and one can imagine how greatly their efforts must be appreciated by worshippers at the cathedral as well as the enjoyment of the boys of their new-found responsibility.

<sup>39</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 19 October 1940

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* 21 June 1941, 8 August 1942

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.* 19 April 1941

<sup>42</sup> *Wood* in E (ATB double choir) and 'Let all the world' – *Vaughan Williams*

But St. Mary's, Reigate is by no means an ordinary choir. The boys are in fact members of the "St. Mary's Choir School" which owes its existence entirely to the wonderful generosity and enthusiasm of Mr Godfrey Searle, their benefactor and devoted choirmaster.<sup>43</sup>

Searle's offer of August 1941 had been gratefully accepted, and the Reigate boys sang from time to time throughout the rest of the war, Chapter formally recording its thanks to them in May 1945.<sup>44</sup> The cathedral's own choristers sometimes sang during school holidays, if they lived in or near London: after 1941 it became a regular arrangement for them to sing at Christmas and through Holy Week to Easter Sunday, and the *St Matthew Passion* was sung as usual in 1944. A concert given during a week of full services at the end of July 1943 showed how the boys were being kept up to the mark: *O clap your hands* (Gibbons), *In exitu Israel* (S. Wesley), *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace* (S. S. Wesley), *Glorious and powerful God* (Stanford), *Let all mortal flesh keep silence* (Bairstow) and *O praise God in his holiness* (Macpherson). The men sang *O give thanks* (Tomkins) on their own, and the boys contributed *Jesu, Lord of life and glory* (Macpherson): the inclusion of *Macpherson in A*<sup>45</sup> in an Evensong sung by the boys alone was another testimony to the hard work being done at Truro. All this could only strengthen everyone's longing for their permanent return.

Early in 1944 such a prospect no longer seemed far distant, and the Headmaster attended Chapter to outline his requirements and give some estimate of the cost. Truro School would be willing (delighted, even) to accept two months' notice, and it was agreed in September that the boys would return to St Paul's as soon as the school was ready, provisional notice being given to Truro for their removal after Christmas.<sup>46</sup> Dykes Bower's early release from the RAF was to be requested, and it was agreed that the *St Matthew Passion* would be sung on 27 March 1945.<sup>47</sup> These arrangements proved premature, as did the BBC's request for the drawing-up of a special service to mark the end of hostilities, for London was beginning to suffer bombardment by flying bombs:

<sup>43</sup> Sydney Nicholson, 'St. Mary's, Reigate,' *English Church Music* Vol. xii No. 1, January 1942. The Choir still exists, currently (1998) under the direction of Mr Jonathan Rennert, as part of St John's Choir and Preparatory School.

<sup>44</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 16 August 1941, 19 May 1945

<sup>45</sup> v. *supra* Ch.6, p.81

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.* 15 January, 12 February, 9 & 16 September 1944

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.* 9, 23 December 1944

the Organist (presumably Hopkins, but possibly Dykes Bower on leave from the RAF) informed Chapter that the boys 'could remain at Truro until the end of next term but could not be housed after then,'<sup>48</sup> and there they duly stayed. In March the Headmaster informed Chapter that he had found an hotel in Truro, at £80 p.a. plus 2% dilapidations, to house them if their stay were prolonged after Easter: this hotel, more accurately to be described as a large house, was occupied by the younger boys under the supervision of Mrs Bartlett who was to be matron of the choir-school in London, but their stay was brief. Old Choristers who joined the choir at the beginning of that term can boast that they too were in Truro, if only for five days.<sup>49</sup>

Suddenly the end of hostilities seemed imminent. Appointments were made to the staff of the choir school at salaries of between £150 and £200, with effect from 1 May; it was decided that the boys would sing on Whitsunday and every afternoon except Thursday, and a revised form of Thanksgiving for Victory was approved. The day predicted by Jessop Price and longed for by the choristers duly arrived, and they boarded the 9.05 to Paddington to return to a choir school that was quite undamaged, if somewhat dirty: on 8 May 1945, the day of Germany's surrender, the full cathedral choir sang at no fewer than ten identical services of thanksgiving, attended by some 35,000 people in all.<sup>50</sup> That night the boys had the thrilling experience of being taken up to the 'stone gallery' (at the base of the dome) to view the vast crowd which completely filled the streets: sleep was out of the question on such an occasion.<sup>51</sup>

It is easy, and all too tempting, to say that it was the cathedral's as well as the nation's finest hour, but the Dean and Chapter had provided a powerful example to other cathedrals by preserving its musical establishment: if, as Churchill is reputed to have said, St Paul's had to be 'saved at all cost,' it had been made obvious that the protection of what went on inside it was just as important. A glance down the Thames Embankment at Westminster Abbey showed all too plainly what might have happened otherwise: there a temporary choir of dayboys was singing at weekends only, and although the authorities were determined to re-found the choir school its buildings were

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid.* 28 October 1944

<sup>49</sup> Perry *op. cit.*

<sup>50</sup> *Chapter Minutes*, 25 January 1946

<sup>51</sup> Perry, *op. cit.*

occupied by the War Office. As William McKie, the Abbey's Organist, succinctly put it, parents could not be expected to send their boys to 'a hypothetical choir school, in temporary premises not yet found, to be staffed by masters not yet engaged.'<sup>52</sup> St Paul's had a head start over its rival in the task of re-establishing its music in the difficult conditions of the early post-war years, and the continuity of tradition so vital to a boys' choir had been preserved unbroken.

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<sup>52</sup> Howard Hollis, *The Best of Both Worlds: A Life of Sir William McKie* (London: Sir William McKie Memorial Trust, 1991), 75

## 'I WONDER WHAT THIS LOT SOUND LIKE.'<sup>1</sup> (1945-67)

Deller<sup>2</sup> recalled what Sir Steuart Wilson had once told him: 'The great advantage of being at St Paul's is that you need never be there.'...Many distinguished concert soloists have passed through the choir of St Paul's, helping to maintain its notable standard, adding an effective dimension to the offices of worship. At the same time they have justifiably lost no chance to further their secular careers. Consequently, a splendid substitution system had long existed when Deller joined....It was, and is, an excellent system of musical patronage, benefiting both church and secular music and helping many professional singers to advance their personal careers.<sup>3</sup>

After the war many cathedrals made little or no attempt to restore those choral services which had been discontinued during the emergency: in a few of the more conservative establishments choral Mattins survived on a couple of weekdays, sometimes at a slightly peculiar hour, but only at St Paul's was something approaching the full pre-war round of daily choral worship resumed, from January 1947. Lichfield and Wells, singled out (along with St Paul's) in a 1934 survey for special praise as the only cathedrals where morning and evening services were sung every single day, had only five weekday sung services apiece by 1958.<sup>4</sup> An authoritative Report could say that 'The maintenance of the choir on a sound basis should be regarded as a first charge on the financial resources of a cathedral,' but it had to admit that 'practically every cathedral, owing to the decline in tithe and trustee stock, is poorer than it was.'<sup>5</sup> Most cathedrals preferred to reduce their lay-clerks' duties to match the reduced value of their pay, but even so it became ever more difficult to recruit them.

In contrast to this general trend, the men's duties at St Paul's were restored to a pattern much the same as before the war, except that on two weekdays the choir sang at

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<sup>1</sup> John Dykes Bower, looking down from the organ during a service and studying a motley assemblage of deputy Vicars-Choral, several of whom he had never seen before.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Deller 1912-79, the leader of the post-war revival of the counter-tenor voice

<sup>3</sup> Hardwick, *op. cit.* 102-3

<sup>4</sup> *Sixty Years of Cathedral Music* (London: OUP for the Church Music Society, 1958), 5,6

<sup>5</sup> *Music in Church: Report of the Archbishops' Committee* (London: Church Information Board, 1951), 67, 69

short lunch-time services rather than at Mattins, the Litany on Wednesdays and a 'Hymn sandwich' on Fridays; for there was a perceived need to use the choir for short, 'popular' services at a time convenient to members of the general public.<sup>6</sup> When it was decided that there should be no choral services for one week in August 1949 it was regarded as a departure from routine serious enough to warrant a statement to the press.<sup>7</sup> The salary of the Vicars-Choral was raised to £275 p.a., subsequently adjusted to £230 salary plus £50 expenses; which may be compared with the £200 p.a. paid to a 'secretary-teacher' at the choir-school, and with the Organist's salary of £700.<sup>8</sup> Though the pay had declined in real terms from its pre-war value, the attendance required remained at the relatively undemanding level agreed during the war, and thus some excellent young singers found membership of the choir an attractive proposition: if it was an exaggeration to say that they 'need never be there,' it was seen as possible in practice to take leave whenever it was required.

Of these singers the most famous was Alfred Deller, the pioneer in the renaissance of the counter-tenor voice: he 'was not a favourite with the Choristers, who, until his arrival, had always sung the alto aria 'Have mercy, Lord, on me,' at the annual performance of the *St Matthew Passion*, but were usurped on Deller's arrival.'<sup>9</sup> He was one of three Vicars-Choral appointed in 1946,<sup>10</sup> the other two being the tenors Eric Barnes (a founder-member of the Deller Consort) and Laurence Watts, both of whom were still in the choir in the early 1970s. Deller too gave quite long service, resigning in 1962. Other notable additions in the next few years were Gerald English (tenor), Thomas Hemsley and Norman Platt<sup>11</sup> (baritones) and Maurice Bevan, another fine baritone and the distinguished editor of Batten, Blow, Greene, Purcell and others, who was the only one of this group to serve the cathedral until retirement: he still (1998) sings as a deputy occasionally.

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<sup>6</sup> W. R. Matthews, *Memories and Meanings* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1969), 190

<sup>7</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 7 May 1949

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* 9 December 1944; 4 May, 28 August, 27 April 1946

<sup>9</sup> Derek Perry, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* 10 August 1946

<sup>11</sup> The founder of Kent Opera

Some of their senior colleagues were less capable. Henry Dutton, the nonagenarian alto and last surviving freeholder, was in the choir almost to the time of his death on Easter Day 1948, though he had long since ceased to utter a note; and one of the sights of those days was Dykes Bower's strange cross-handed style of conducting unaccompanied psalms on Fridays from the bass end of the Cantoris stalls, it being generally assumed that one hand was solely engaged in 'keeping Mr Mercer quiet.'<sup>12</sup> The same Frank Mercer was also the source of the only improper remark ever attributed to Dykes Bower: as Mercer uttered the words 'As long as I live will I magnify thee on this manner,'<sup>13</sup> the Organist was heard to exclaim with great feeling, "God forbid." With these and one or two other exceptions, however, the Vicars-Choral were of a good standard in the late 'forties and the 'fifties, perhaps the best for a long time: indeed, as will be seen below, these were good years for the choir as a whole.

The choristers resumed much of their pre-war routine at once, including the unpopular duty of singing with the voluntary choir at the service on Sunday evenings: the school was still exclusively for choristers, and the admission of two non-singing boys (the 'sons of a minor canon' who was in fact the Headmaster) was unusual and did not set a precedent.<sup>14</sup> The continued existence of a school of only thirty-eight boys, all of them choristers, seemed at odds with the trend elsewhere of enlarging small choir-schools by the addition of non-singing pupils, and thus turning them into preparatory schools which happened to include a group of choristers. No longer could these schools' timetables be built round the requirements of what had now become only a minority of pupils: practices were pushed out to the beginning or end of the school day, and sung morning services during the week seemed an especial nuisance. Nor could the choristers stay on as long as their voices lasted, for all pupils had to move on to their next schools together, in the summer before their fourteenth birthday. In contrast, choristers still remained at St Paul's until the age of fourteen years, six months, subject to the Organist's approval and with any variation in this rule agreed by both Organist and Headmaster.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Information supplied by John Butterfield, chorister 1948-54

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 63, verse 5

<sup>14</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 1 September 1945

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* 6 May 1944

The future of the school seemed far from certain in these years. The international situation was so troublous late in 1950 that plans for the choristers' evacuation were discussed, with Truro Cathedral School approached once again: Truro being unwilling or unable, Jessop Price was bidden to look elsewhere, and was eventually able to report that the boys could be accommodated at Salisbury.<sup>16</sup> The plans for the reconstruction of the City included a firm proposal to widen Carter Lane, with the demolition of all its properties including the school: its replacement by a new building on a fresh site at the east end of the cathedral seemed inevitable, but no-one was prepared to predict when this might be, and thus there was no immediate prospect of any significant changes to the school, even assuming them to be necessary or desirable. Its expenses continued to rise, as did the cost of the music in general:<sup>17</sup> it was agreed that the school's accounts be examined closely, and transferred to the Chapter Treasurer when Jessop Price retired. Grants from Local Education Authorities provided some relief meanwhile.<sup>18</sup>

Mattins had not been sung at Truro on weekdays, and it had already been agreed that its re-introduction at St Paul's would be postponed until the boys were ready, the time meanwhile being used for extra rehearsal. At the end of their first year back at St Paul's, Dykes Bower congratulated the choristers, still only seventeen-strong after wartime reductions, on a strenuous year's work in which some two hundred anthems and services had been learnt afresh.<sup>19</sup> These were almost exclusively from the pre-war repertory, and generally of modest difficulty, two short anthems by Walker Robson being the only complete novelties.<sup>20</sup> If the boys perhaps hankered after the more relaxed and humorous regime of Douglas Hopkins, who became Organist of Peterborough Cathedral in 1946, and was replaced by the genial Harry Gabb,<sup>21</sup> they

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* 2, 16 December 1950, 30 June 1951

<sup>17</sup> Matthews and Atkins, *op. cit.* 307, give these examples: payments to the Vicars-Choral £2,900 in 1934, £7,000 in 1954; choir-school £4,700 in 1934, £8,100 in 1954.

<sup>18</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 6 December 1956, 5 December 1957

<sup>19</sup> Perry, *op. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> *v. infra*. Appendices 7-10, *passim*

<sup>21</sup> Previously Organist of Llandaff Cathedral: in 1953 he added to his duties at St Paul's the post of Organist & Composer of H. M. Chapel Royal, St James's Palace, and from that time an Assistant Sub-Organist (successively Gerald Wheeler, Derek Holman, Richard Popplewell, Timothy Farrell and Christopher Herrick) was appointed at St Paul's, to take his place on Sunday mornings and to assist at other times.



recognised that Dykes Bower's more pedestrian approach was a necessary adjunct to the restoration of peace-time discipline, as was his renowned punctuality: they gained not a single minute from his offer to excuse them ten minutes of rehearsal time for every minute that he was late.<sup>22</sup> He was cautious and thorough almost to a fault, and only a handful of new or revived works was added each year: the only service ever allowed out without a complete run-through was *Lloyd in E flat* (Communion).<sup>23</sup> In consequence of his caution, the boys' singing was efficient and utterly reliable, but without any special beauty of tone or subtlety of interpretation.<sup>24</sup>

When Mattins was again sung on weekdays, from 1 January 1947, it was sung by the full choir only on Tuesday and Saturday, with the men supplying Monday and Thursday: the lunch-time services previously mentioned took the place of Mattins on the two days when formerly the Litany had been sung and *Benedictus* had been replaced by *Jubilate Deo*, and thus there was no place for settings of this latter canticle until some relaxation of the rule was permitted later in that year. At first the handful of settings used on Sunday mornings did duty for weekdays also, with more frequent repetition: the short services of Byrd and Tallis were then added, and after the singing of *Jubilate Deo* was permitted on weekdays (but *never* on Sundays) the settings by Boyce in A and C re-appeared, being joined in 1948 by the second service of Tomkins (completely new to St Paul's) and such staple fare as Rogers in D and Stanford in F.

Much of the workaday repertory of the late 1930s was restored in the early years of peacetime, and a few omissions were remedied, perhaps from Dykes Bower's recollection of his years at New College and Durham: it is good to notice, for example, the exhumation of Boyce (*O where shall wisdom be found*), Greene (*God is our hope and strength*) Ouseley (the admirable *O Saviour of the world*, never previously sung at St Paul's) and Walmisley (*Remember O Lord what is come upon us*). The Second Service of Gibbons was introduced in 1951 and was frequently sung on Sunday afternoons, when the traditional 'big anthem' also continued to be represented by such extensive and taxing pieces as Gibbons' *O clap your hands*; the *Dies Irae* from Mozart's *Requiem*, sung in two instalments on two consecutive Sundays in Advent as

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<sup>22</sup> Perry, *op. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> Information supplied by John Butterfield

<sup>24</sup> Information supplied by Maurice Bevan

*Day of anger* and *Think, good Jesu*; Samuel Sebastian Wesley's *Ascribe unto the Lord*; and his father's *In exitu Israel*, which had been preserved in the choir's repertory as a showpiece throughout the war. The services and anthems of Stanford and Wood held an important place; Gray had suffered a decline, and just as before the war Stainer was represented solely by the Evening Service in E flat and the anthem *They that wait upon the Lord*, an extract from *O clap your hands. Adesto nunc propitius* by Tallis stands out as a strange bedfellow with the sizeable quantity of standard cathedral anthems re-introduced in these years.

Anything in an unfamiliar idiom took a long time to learn. The introduction of Herbert Sumsion's Evening Service in G was a highlight of 1946, it seeming lighter and fresher than the choir's usual fare of Gray, Stanford and Wood:<sup>25</sup> the *Collegium Regale* Evening Service by Howells<sup>26</sup> is recalled as having been in rehearsal for most of a term before its first performance on 2 June 1951, and it remained for some years the choir's sole example of that composer's mature style. It seems surprising that Dykes Bower, a Gloucester man, did not favour Howells's *Gloucester Service*,<sup>27</sup> which would have suited the acoustics of St Paul's much better.

Willis had estimated £14,300 for the rebuilding of the cathedral organ after its wartime misadventures,<sup>28</sup> and the bulk of the work was complete by the middle of 1946, a diapason chorus of second-hand Lewis pipework being added to the Dome division in 1949: a few more alterations were made when the organ was cleaned in 1960. Men, boys and organ were widely heard in broadcasts during the early post-war years, for the cathedral had caught the public's mood as a symbol of the nation's successful defiance of the enemy, and its music had quickly been restored to a commendably high standard. It was the natural venue for special services such as the Thanksgiving for the Silver Wedding of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (26 April 1948, the Opening of the Festival of Britain (3 May 1951) and the Thanksgiving for the Coronation of H. M. Queen Elizabeth II. Evensong was brought forward to three o'clock 'on the evening that the service is broadcast (*sic*),' and a recording for a broadcast to the Empire was

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<sup>25</sup> Perry *op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> Novello PCB 1280; composed 1945, published 1947

<sup>27</sup> Novello PCB 1279; composed 1946, published 1947

<sup>28</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 28 April 1945

made each month, beginning on 7 July 1946.<sup>29</sup> These were reduced from monthly to quarterly after 1950, on grounds of cost.<sup>30</sup> The choir was also included in recordings of an Anthology of Church Music, sponsored by the British Council and issued on 78 r.p.m. discs by Columbia: the contributions by the choir of St Paul's, which include *I have surely built thee an house* (Boyce) and *Ascribe unto the Lord* (S. S. Wesley), are especially memorable for the fine singing of the men and for the clarity and authority of the organ accompaniments. The other choirs were those of New College, Oxford; St George's Chapel, Windsor and Canterbury Cathedral (both fairly dreadful); King's College, Cambridge; Westminster Abbey; and York Minster, this last distinctly good for its time.<sup>31</sup> The third and final series came out in 1953, just before the advent of long-playing records, and Denis Stevens, a specialist in mediaeval and renaissance music, was somewhat improbably chosen to review it. He was predictably unimpressed:

St Paul's cathedral Choir may be heard in a tedious anthem by S. S. Wesley, aptly enough entitled 'The Wilderness.' The closing bars are a splendid apotheosis of the mawkish and the maudlin, and the small solo boy who sounds as if he is genuinely in pain has my sincere sympathy.<sup>32</sup>

He was extremely rude about Canterbury and Windsor!

In many respects this was a vintage period for the choir of St Paul's. Although an orchestra could no longer be afforded for the Patronal Festival, and the Festival of St Cecilia had assumed the former role of the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy as a forum for the performance of large-scale special commissions,<sup>33</sup> the great performances of the *St Matthew Passion* had been resumed, and a performance of *Messiah* with the original score was planned for March 1950, a distinctly adventurous undertaking at that date:<sup>34</sup> a visit to Cambridge on 27 June 1949 to sing with the choir of King's College seemed to

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<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* 8, 30 March 1946

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* 13 August 1949

<sup>31</sup> Two of the York recordings have been transferred to CD, Amphion PHI CD 144.

<sup>32</sup> *The Musical Times*, March 1953, 119

<sup>33</sup> It was held from 1947 for many years in St Sepulchre, Holborn Viaduct (the musicians' church) on or about 22 November. The choirs of St Paul's, H. M. Chapels Royal, Westminster Abbey and other establishments were conducted by Dykes Bower: the only commission to attain widespread popularity has been Gerald Finzi's *God is gone up with a triumphant shout*.

<sup>34</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 23 July 1949

associate the choir with the supremely high standards of that famous body.<sup>35</sup> A tour of the United States and Canada in the autumn of 1953 found the choir of St Paul's at the height of its fame and capabilities.

It was the first time the choir had sung outside London: the tour fell conveniently in Coronation Year, though its true purpose was to commemorate the building of the American Memorial Chapel in St Paul's, and 'the visit generally was said to have been worth sixty diplomatic visits.'<sup>36</sup> Nothing was left to chance in the men's contractual arrangements, and the Chancellor (Canon Collins) was even prepared to find extra money for any Vicar-Choral who could convince him that he would have earned more by staying in this country.<sup>37</sup> The tour was entirely concerned with goodwill, not fundraising: the choir sailed on R.M.S. *Queen Elizabeth*, arriving in New York on 29 September 1953, and began the tour with an opening service in the Cathedral of St John the Divine, attended by a congregation of some 8,000. After forty-one recitals and services in the U.S.A. and Canada, which included concerts in Washington, Boston, Montreal, Ottawa, Chicago and New Orleans and a reception hosted by President Eisenhower in the White House, the eighteen men and thirty boys concluded their gruelling schedule with a concert in the Carnegie Hall. The Dean was pleased to report that the boys returned 'neither enfeebled in body nor swollen in head.'<sup>38</sup>

The tour was a watershed in what one might term the choir's relationship with the cathedral. Thus far in the cathedral's recent history there had been two extended periods when many of the statutory services had been deprived of music, the closure of the dome area between 1925 and 1930, and the period of the Second World War; but in each case at least a part of the choir had remained in residence. Now it seemed more important to use the choir as roving ambassadors of goodwill, to express the cathedral's and the nation's thanks to a wartime ally: the dual precedent had been set of the regular choir's extended absence and the entrusting of its duties to visiting substitutes. 'Visiting choirs' had been a rare phenomenon until then, though Durham had made some use of choirs from the Diocese during the cathedral choir's summer vacation in

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid.* 18 June 1949

<sup>36</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 28 January 1954

<sup>37</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 28 February 1953

<sup>38</sup> Matthews and Atkins, *op. cit.* 324

the 1930s; but at St Paul's some part of the choir had hitherto been on duty all the year round. The decision to give all the men a fixed annual holiday around the last Sunday in August signalled a change in the standard of attendance which the authorities felt it was reasonable to expect.<sup>39</sup>

On its return the choir gave a concert in the Royal Festival Hall, London, and made two long-playing records of the sacred music and madrigals sung during the tour: though of some interest, they offer a style and standard of performance which the early Argo recordings of Canterbury, Ely and King's would completely eclipse within five years or so. All this lay in the future, however, and meanwhile the choir's annual recitals in the Royal Festival Hall were well received, especially that of 1957:

In connexion with the Concert at the Festival Hall, the Dean and Chapter wish to record their appreciation of all that the Gentlemen of the Choir did to make the recital a notable artistic success. They recognise that without the generous and enthusiastic support of the Gentlemen of the Choir, nothing approaching this level of achievement would have been possible.<sup>40</sup>

When Dykes Bower had completed twenty-one years as Organist, he was the subject of a 'pen-portrait' which paid handsome tribute to his achievements:

Building a good choral tradition is an unending struggle, and only since the war has Dr Dykes Bower found lasting scope for his ambitions....As for his methods with a choir of thirty boys and eighteen men, one might say that he trains them by sheer weight of musical personality.<sup>41</sup>

At the beginning of 1959 Dykes Bower made special mention of the excellence of the choristers and the choir's 'care and devotion' in maintaining the services, and it would seem that the choir was at its best in these years.<sup>42</sup>

Another sign of the choir's high reputation in the 1950s was the Evening Service which Herbert Howells composed for St Paul's:

Of the series of canticle-settings offered to people and places this is the most extended in scale. With the great spaces of St Paul's in mind, as well as the acoustical problems Dr. John Dykes Bower had experienced during our training in Gloucester cathedral, the nature of this setting would be acutely influenced. Prolonged "echo", notable in St Paul's, would dictate a less rapidly-changing harmonic

<sup>39</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 27 March 1954

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* 19 October 1957

<sup>41</sup> William Palmer, *The Musical Times* December 1958, 679-80

<sup>42</sup> *Chapter Minutes*, 29 January 1959

rhythm than would be feasible in many less-reverberant buildings. So it is that in this setting harmonic and tonality changes are deployed in more leisured, more spacious ways. Climaxes are built more slowly. But with these conditions there goes a heightened volume of sound, and a tonal opulence commensurate with a vast church.<sup>43</sup>

Its gestation was leisurely: it is dated October 1951, and the autograph manuscript in the cathedral library contains an earlier working of the *Nunc Dimittis* Gloria, but Novello did not publish it until 1954, and its debut at St Paul's is illustrative of the difficulty of introducing anything new and difficult to a choir whose sole full rehearsal took place before Evensong on Wednesday or Friday. After some weeks' rehearsal (presumably) it was performed on two successive Wednesdays<sup>44</sup> and then 'rested' for several months before being passed as safe for performance for the first time on a Sunday.<sup>45</sup> A more straightforward piece, Herbert Murrill's Evening Service in E, had a 'dummy run' on a Wednesday before appearing on a Sunday several weeks later.<sup>46</sup> When the International Congress of Organists attended Evensong on Friday 2 August 1956, all eighteen men were called to a special rehearsal at a fee of two guineas each, a similar arrangement having been made for the Cathedral Organists' Association the previous year.<sup>47</sup> Music for men's voices could only be rehearsed during the boys' holidays; hence the dreary diet of plainsong, simple fauxbourdon canticles and odd verses from the English Hymnal masquerading as 'anthems' which had long characterised the 'men-only' services.

Alfred Deller is credited with some influence over the music through his friendship with Canon John Collins, who in a mutual exchange of offices with Canon Marcus Knight became Precentor instead of Chancellor early in 1954:

Many of the improvements that were made sprang originally from him [Deller]. For instance, in services where we had only men singing, the practice had been to share alternate verses of the psalms between the choir and the bass soloist. It meant that if you happened to have your weakest bass on duty you were stuck with him as soloist.<sup>48</sup> Alfred got me to have that altered, so that verses were sung antiphonally, between the two sides of the choir. It was his idea to stop having the Amens played on the

<sup>43</sup> Herbert Howells, sleeve-note to LP record, Argo RG 507

<sup>44</sup> 19 & 26 October 1955

<sup>45</sup> 12 February 1956

<sup>46</sup> 11 July, 5 August 1956

<sup>47</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 19 May 1956, 12 November 1955

<sup>48</sup> v. *supra*. p.117, Dykes Bower *re* Mercer

organ, and to start using settings by Byrd, Morley, Tomkins and others in addition to the eternal Ferial and Tallis for the services on saints' days. The outcome was that the services became much more musically agreeable, and at the same time more devotionally fitting.<sup>49</sup>

William Smith's responses had been used on occasion since 1952, and those of Thomas Tomkins were introduced in July 1955: others had to wait a little longer. Chapter also agreed that Collins should negotiate with the Organist and Succentor for the use of settings of *Agnus Dei* at the Eucharist; the singing of *Amen* after hymns with Doxologies; the cessation of playing Amens at the end of prayers intoned by a minor canon; and an increased repertoire for 'men-only' services.<sup>50</sup> Precentor, Organist and Succentor considered the subject afresh some eight years later, and Chapter made the following resolutions:

- 1a. Ferial Responses in Advent and Lent.
- 1b. Smith Responses on special occasions and services during greater Festivals..
- 1c. Outside Advent and Lent responses to be changed regularly, with a selection from three sets e.g. Tomkins, Byrd and Morley.
- 2 Amens to be played on the organ only when necessary on musical grounds.
- 3 When music was conducted from the stalls, there should be a co-conductor opposite.
- 4 Chants for psalms and canticle should not be played over except on Sundays.
- 5 The question of changes of chant in long psalms must wait for the new translation,<sup>51</sup> but the Organist could experiment meanwhile.
- 6 There should be formal and informal organ recitals.
- 7 Chapter was pleased with the enlargement of the repertory, especially at services sung by men's voices.
- 8 A simple Credo other than Merbecke should be found for the Sung Eucharist. The use of Latin settings of the Mass was not at present advisable.

Lest St Paul's be thought hopelessly old-fashioned, it should be remembered that the use of many and varied sets of Responses is a comparatively recent development, and that the widespread use of Latin settings belongs to the era of the Alternative Service Book, whose rite they fit rather better than that of the Book of Common Prayer. The choir was not afraid to tackle new and unfamiliar music on special occasions: a Te Deum which Edmund Rubbra wrote for the opening of the City of London Festival on 9 July 1962 was considered by Dykes Bower 'quite the most difficult work the Cathedral Choir has ever been called upon to sing in all its history.'<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Canon John Collins, in Hardwick and Hardwick *op. cit.* 111

<sup>50</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 8 September 1956

<sup>51</sup> *The Revised Psalter* (London, SPCK 1964): Dykes Bower was involved in its production.

<sup>52</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 25 January 1963

A decline seemed to have set in, however, or perhaps standards elsewhere had risen. Some considered that the best boys' choirs in London were now those of All Saints, Margaret Street (Michael Fleming) and Hampstead Parish Church (Martindale Sidwell): under George Malcolm's direction the choir of Westminster Cathedral had already enthralled (or shocked) church musicians with its recording of Victoria's *Responses for Tenebrae*, in which the boys sang with a colourful intensity which attracted admiration from the wider musical world,<sup>53</sup> and a similarly robust but nevertheless 'Anglican' sound could be heard from the boys of Ely Cathedral.<sup>54</sup> Recordings of the choir of King's College, Cambridge were being issued in considerable number, and those of Masses by Byrd, Taverner and Haydn (*Nelson Mass*) still give great pleasure to the listener: the distinctive style of the choir of St John's College was beginning to attract acclaim, and even the choir of a provincial cathedral (Peterborough) issued a recording of unusual quality and interest.<sup>55</sup> The boys of St Paul's Cathedral Choir were still being well trained, though in a somewhat old-fashioned way: the real problem lay with the men.

Deller may have been an informed and constructive critic of the cathedral's music, but his own attendance was illustrative of the continuing and growing problem of absenteeism. There had always been bright young men who found that their outside engagements became incompatible with their duties at the cathedral, and one may instance Keith Falkner,<sup>56</sup> who had to resign in September 1926 after his leave of absence had been extended once too often;<sup>57</sup> but the problem had latterly become acute. In the summer of 1952 Chapter wrote to Newby, Tate, English and Deller 'reminding them that they had broken their contracts, and enquiring whether they wished to review them,' and later that year Deller was summoned to discuss his use of deputies, Chapter reminding him that it 'could not consent to any permanent ignoring of the Vicars-Choral

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<sup>53</sup> LP recording, Argo RG 205, 1960

<sup>54</sup> Music for the Feast of Christmas, Argo RG 148, 1959

<sup>55</sup> Tudor Church Music: Batten and Dering; Argo RG 402, 1962

<sup>56</sup> Bass-baritone, noted Bach singer: he succeeded Sir Ernest Bullock as Director of the RCM in 1960.

<sup>57</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 17 July, 4 September 1926



attendance regulations.'<sup>58</sup> It is recalled that one Sunday afternoon at about this time seventeen of the eighteen Vicars-Choral appeared by deputy, being involved in a concert at the new Royal Festival Hall: only the oldest tenor appeared in person, being presumably too old for employment by any outside agency, but he surprised the boys by his beautiful rendering of the solos in that afternoon's anthem, 'The sorrows of death' from Mendelssohn's *Hymn of Praise*.<sup>59</sup>

Matters were particularly bad in the spring of 1954, when Chapter refused to excuse various latenesses and absences and reminded the men that services at Westminster Abbey were no excuse for lateness at St Paul's: it was particularly tempting to try to sing Evensong at the Abbey at three o'clock before a dash along the embankment to St Paul's for a repeat performance at four. However much it might protest, Chapter seemed to accept that it was better to have men of the quality of Alfred Deller, Maurice Bevan and Gerald English on a part-time basis, rather than lose them altogether: Deller's leave of absence for a couple of months in the autumn became almost an annual event.<sup>60</sup> There was the danger that the better singers would resign if pushed too hard, and Gerald English left the choir in 1959: his resignation was at first refused by Chapter but the Organist was content to let him go.<sup>61</sup> When the older singers retired on reaching the age of sixty, Chapter granted them an extra £100 p.a. pension until they became eligible for the state pension at sixty-five: only Purvis was deemed good enough to be kept on after the age of sixty, finally retiring at Michaelmas 1960, some five years later. Roland Robson, a Vicar-Choral since 1934, died in office in 1958 at the early age of fifty-one, and was honoured with a funeral in the cathedral at capitular expense,<sup>62</sup> a sign of Chapter's continued benevolent concern for its employees which was also evidenced by sundry grants in case of illness or accident. When the parents of a chorister, Price Bennett, emigrated, it was arranged that if he saw out his full time in the choir his passage to join them in Canada would then be paid.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> *ibid.* 26 July, 20 December 1952

<sup>59</sup> Information supplied by John Butterfield

<sup>60</sup> e.g. October-December 1956, 1957, 1959; *vide Weekly Chapter Minutes, passim*

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.* 19, 26 September, 3 October 1959

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.* 6 September 1958

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.* 4 August 1951

Purvis's successor was none other than Robert Tear, and the choir was full of famous names in the early 1960s, such as Ian Partridge (a temporary replacement for English), Michael Rippon, Christopher Keyte and his successor John Shirley-Quirk. None of them stayed more than a year or two, St Paul's merely being a convenient stepping-stone to greater things: only Geoffrey Shaw (baritone, appointed 1960) and Alan Green (tenor, 1962) were to remain in the choir until retirement. The men's attendance became even worse: already the Succentor had been instructed to pass on Chapter's displeasure at 'the worsening tendency towards the breaking of the rules about deputies,' but a proposed relaxation of the rules looked suspiciously like weakness on Chapter's part, and there were further complaints in the ensuing years.<sup>64</sup> Longer summer holidays and the introduction of a brief break after Christmas 1963 benefited the men by reducing the number of occasions for which they might have to pay deputies, and a meeting with the authorities at Westminster Abbey resulted in an agreement to pay the members of both choirs £600 p.a., rising to £650 after September 1963;<sup>65</sup> but there was an admission of defeat in the suggestion that Evensong should be sung by the boys alone on Saturdays, when the men were most likely to be engaged on solo work outside the cathedral.<sup>66</sup>

The story of Dykes Bower wondering what that day's set of men might sound like may well be apocryphal, together with his allegedly feeling the need to introduce himself to the group of men who happened to be present at the weekly choir practice, but the fact that a Vicar-Choral might attend a rehearsal in person and then supply a deputy for the performance, or *vice versa*, was all too reminiscent of the kind of malpractice long since eradicated from London orchestras. As ever, the men 'took cover' behind the singing of the boys, and it was fortunate that the continued offer of a free education at the choir-school was attracting talented choristers who went on to distinguished careers, such as the bass David Thomas (who returned to the cathedral as a Vicar-Choral in 1963), the composer Robin Holloway and, of a somewhat later generation, James Lancelot, organist of Durham Cathedral.<sup>67</sup> Jessop Price had retired in

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<sup>64</sup> *ibid.* 6 May, 15 October 1960, 28 April 1962

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.* 22 December 1962

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.* 4 July 1964

<sup>67</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 25 January 1961

1958: it fell to his successor, the Revd J. F. M. Llewellyn, to take the school into its new premises, for the long and frustrating saga of its relocation was nearing its end, and the new school was opened in May, 1967. The architect originally chosen had been very expensively paid off at the end of 1963, and the cloister linking school and cathedral never materialised, but at least the boys could move between the two without having to brave the traffic in Ludgate Hill.<sup>68</sup> The building was designed to include office premises, and it incorporated the tower of St Augustine's, Watling Street: it was intended to house solely the choristers, for the school continued to be run on its traditional lines.<sup>69</sup> Though more conveniently situated than its predecessor, it is regarded by many as an inferior building: it is ironic that after all those years' effort and uncertainty the choir school's old premises still stand as evidence for this assertion, for the plan to widen Carter Lane was never carried out.<sup>70</sup>

The construction of a new school was an act of faith in a decade when all sorts of traditions were being questioned, and though the cathedral's continued financial troubles could not be ignored the maintenance of its services remained a prime concern. Many old-fashioned attitudes and customs had lingered, understandably so as Dean and Organist had both been in office for over thirty years: Canon Collins' attempts to persuade his colleagues in Chapter to allow concerts in the cathedral met with only partial success, nor was his suggestion of charging for tickets at the performances of *Messiah* and the *St Matthew Passion* well received, for the loss on these was seen as one which the cathedral must bear. Only at the end of Dean Matthews' time, and in Dykes Bower's final year, was the number of choral services each week reduced to allow the addition of two periods of science to the choir-school's curriculum, with Mattins on Mondays plain and the Wednesday lunch-time service discontinued: the boys also ceased to attend Mattins on Tuesdays.<sup>71</sup> Some modest up-dating of the repertory had taken place, notably in the introduction of contemporary through-composed settings of *Benedicite, omnia opera* by William Harris, Francis Jackson and Herbert Sumsion, a

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<sup>68</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 1 February 1964

<sup>69</sup> It has been adapted and enlarged since 1988 to accommodate a number of day pupils.

<sup>70</sup> The old school is currently (1998) used by the Youth Hostels Association.

<sup>71</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 3 December 1966

belated improvement on the chant-settings previously employed: Benjamin Britten's *Te Deum* in C was enlivening Mattins on occasion, though having been composed in 1934 it was hardly new by now. It is startling to find Kenneth Leighton's *Drop, drop, slow tears* in the lists, for nothing else remotely like it was being sung, and there was much music in common use elsewhere which had yet to find a place at St Paul's. By contrast, in the same year the *Missa Brevis* by Walton could be heard at York, and Evening Services by Leighton, Rubbra and Tippett, in addition to the services and anthems of the Minster's organist Francis Jackson: Durham could offer anthems by Arthur Bliss, Gerald Finzi and Howells, as well as the same Leighton and Rubbra services, amid a bewilderingly large and eclectic selection of music, for it was well said that in those days 'Durham did not have a repertoire; it had a library.'<sup>72</sup>

Part of this 'modest up-dating' at St Paul's paradoxically took the form of an increase in the amount of music by older composers, some of it edited by Maurice Bevan,<sup>73</sup> and a handful of foreign Latin anthems of the Renaissance period had brought a little relief to the repertory for men's voices; but the majority of the music being sung was the same as in 1946 or 1939. A fresh approach was needed, and day-to-day standards of performance seemed to leave something to be desired: correspondence in *The Musical Times* concerning the quality of cathedral and collegiate choirs did not include St Paul's among those ten establishments where one could rely on finding the Office decently sung, and another correspondent described the music as 'complacently bad.'<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, Dykes Bower's eyesight was failing, and he retired at the beginning of 1968.

He had been Organist of the cathedral longer than any of his immediate predecessors, and was unquestionably the leading church musician of his generation: no committee seemed complete without him, whether it was producing *Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised*, the Report of the Archbishops' Committee (1951) or the Revised Psalter. On Sir Sydney Nicholson's death he was made one of three Associate Directors

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<sup>72</sup> Dr Brian Crosby

<sup>73</sup> e.g. the 4<sup>th</sup> service of Adrian Batten (OUP). In the copies of this service still in use at St Paul's the words 'genera-ti-on,' 'salva-ti-on' etc. have been altered by Dykes Bower to 'generation,' 'salvation' and the like: 'authentic performance' was still some way off!

<sup>74</sup> *The Musical Times* June 1965, 446; October 1965, 776, December 1965, 951. The ten mentioned were; King's and St John's, Cambridge; Magdalen and New College, Oxford; Ely, Chichester, Guildford, Peterborough, Salisbury and Worcester Cathedrals.

of the Royal School of Church Music, together with Gerald Knight and William McKie, and after Knight was appointment full-time Director he deputised for him during his visits to affiliated choirs abroad. He taught at the Royal College of Music (1936-69), was President of the Royal College of Organists (1960-62) and Master of the Worshipful Company of Musicians (1967-8), and was knighted on his retirement from St Paul's.<sup>75</sup> He was an exceptionally good organist, as a reviewer was surprised but pleased to discover:

There was a time, not so long ago, when the organists of St Paul's were little inclined to give recitals, and perhaps little capable of doing so. It is delightful therefore to find Dr. J. Dykes Bower so accessible, all the more since he has a clear, effortless, balanced style, with a genuine organ touch and natural although perhaps over-muscular phrasing.<sup>76</sup>

He edited Bach for Novello & Co. with Walter Emery, and though not professing any ability as a composer he composed a handful of hymn-tunes of which the best is probably *Amen Court*.<sup>77</sup>

He was of a reserved and private disposition, and if at times it seemed that he had to be pushed by Chapter into making improvements he might well have contended that his responsibility as its loyal servant was to carry out its wishes, not initiate policy himself. He had shown more initiative in his younger days, when he had wrested from the Succentor to himself the task of selecting the music to be sung, and it is unfortunate that he did not have the opportunity to exercise personal control over the men, for Chapter remained in nominal charge of them and increasingly the Vicars-Choral seemed a law unto themselves: in this regard the Organist had no option but to make the best of a bad job, and in the 1960s the choir suffered in consequence. It is kinder to remember him at his best, in the more settled and disciplined days of the choir's post-war heyday.

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<sup>75</sup> Obituary, *The Musical Times* August 1981, 553

<sup>76</sup> A. F. Farmer, *The Musical Times* September 1954, 486

<sup>77</sup> A&M(Revised) 237, set to 'O King enthroned on high'

## FULL CIRCLE (1968-72)

We must seize the opportunities offered by the continued existence of cathedral choirs, and promote the essential rôle they have to play in the life of the church as a whole. The pessimists will say that it is already too late. Personally I disagree; but they can only be confounded if we direct our attention to making the best use of the facilities we still possess for making expert music in church, and above all to gaining, and propagating, a full awareness of music's indispensable function. (Christopher Dearnley, Organist of St Paul's 1968-90)<sup>1</sup>

It seemed as if history was repeating itself at St Paul's, for less than a century after the Victorians' great reforms their successors were asking the same questions: what was to be done about the choir, and how should the organ be rebuilt? The new Dean<sup>2</sup> had fresh and sometimes extraordinary ideas, and if some of them (such as his abseiling down the west front of the cathedral) prompted the cynical comment that the church was supposed to be feeding the sheep, not amusing the goats, at least there seemed to be some life in the place at last. Just as in 1936 a search was made among the younger cathedral organists for a man of energy and proven ability, and the obvious candidate seemed to be Christopher Dearnley, Organist of Salisbury Cathedral.<sup>3</sup>

He had been Organ Scholar of Worcester College, Oxford from 1948 to 1952, studying with Edmund Rubbra: he had been appointed Assistant Organist of Salisbury Cathedral in 1954 and its Organist in 1957, and his close acquaintance there with an unspoilt and little-altered Father Willis organ gave him a yardstick by which to judge the instrument at St Paul's. Salisbury Cathedral's choir enjoyed a high reputation under his direction, and made several recordings including one of anthems from the

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Need for a Reformed Approach to Church Music,' *Sixty-Second Annual Report, 1967, of The Church Music Society: in English Church Music 1969* (RSCM), 25

<sup>2</sup> The Very Revd Martin Sullivan, formerly Archdeacon of London: Canon Collins was openly disappointed at being passed over.

<sup>3</sup> He retired from St Paul's in 1990 and now resides in Australia. Barry Rose, Organist of Guildford Cathedral, was appointed in 1975 to assist him with training the choir, to be followed by John Scott who became Organist of St Paul's on Dearnley's retirement.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,<sup>4</sup> in which he was an acknowledged specialist: he had edited an anthology of the period<sup>5</sup> shortly before coming to St Paul's and was now at work on a book.<sup>6</sup> He had even earned a certain notoriety by playing the organ for a 'beat' service in Salisbury Cathedral.<sup>7</sup> Not since Stainer had an organist of St Paul's been a musicologist of some standing: like Stainer he had a carefully thought-out vision of what the cathedral's music should be, which he expounded in person and in print. Unlike Stainer he was in fact allowed a period of grace in which to make his mark: 'the Precentor [Canon Collins] stressed that he must be allowed full scope to make changes. An experimental period of at least three years might well be necessary or desirable.'<sup>8</sup>

He had the confidence to confront some of the currently fashionable criticisms of cathedral music, which might be summed up as a conviction that there was something un-Christian in spending so much time and money on such an esoteric thing as music in which the congregation was in any case unable to join. He felt that the usual justification of cathedral music in terms of its 'glorious tradition' cut no ice at all (how right he was!):

We can no longer counteract philistinism, ignorance and insensitivity with only a corpus of better music, more expertly performed, building up what is usually called 'the heritage of English cathedral music'. We need to adopt a positive approach; not a negative rejection of all the changes and developments in church life and priorities, but a forwarding of a deeper understanding of music's place in changing circumstances....The first thing to do is to get away from ideas that no longer help, such as the one that music is an *ornament* to worship. Much damage has been done by making worship one thing and music another, added like pepper and salt to taste, a relationship summarised in the glibly used phrase, 'music *in* worship'. The two are inseparable, and the concept is better served by altering a single letter so as to say, 'music *is* worship'.<sup>9</sup>

He also applied some robust common sense to the whole question of 'congregational participation,' memorably pointing out that to be a fully active traveller on a journey from Manchester to London he did not feel obliged to drive the train himself:

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<sup>4</sup> Argo RG247, 1961

<sup>5</sup> *The Treasury of English Church Music, Vol. 3, 1650-1760* (London: Blandford Press, 1965)

<sup>6</sup> *English Church Music 1650-1750* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1970)

<sup>7</sup> Peter Le Huray, 'Popular Elements in Church Music,' *English Church Music 1967* (RSCM), 16

<sup>8</sup> *Chapter Minutes*, 25 January 1968

<sup>9</sup> Dearnley, *op. cit.* 25

The move towards encouraging a congregation to join in vocally more and more of the liturgy can destroy much of what a service sets out to do....Peter when he had seen the glory of Christ transfigured 'wist not what to say'. We, lacking his awe, not only think we know what to say, but are prepared to banter it out loud in a most undignified and unhumble manner. Because we must affirm our *personal* belief (as though that were important in a communal activity) and because we mistakenly think this personal expression becomes corporate if we all say it together, we jettison a sung Creed by a trained choir. The choir do not necessarily wish to sing the Creed, that is they do not think they are better equipped morally than the man in the pew, but they recognise they have the skills to do it in a way which is dignified and meaningful. There is no reason to make the process of prayer more difficult than it is; when the Creed or Gloria is skilfully and beautifully sung, we are free to concentrate on the significance of the words, to really (*sic*) pray them, than when we have to join in the confused mumble of a congregation saying, or worse still singing, those words.<sup>10</sup>

Here was a man who was prepared to go on the offensive and claim that the traditional worship of a cathedral church could say something to the modern age; and it was good that he had such ideas to express, for St Paul's valued its traditions.

The choir of St Paul's in 1968 was in all essentials that founded by Stainer and Sparrow Simpson a century ago, but it had run to seed: various accommodations and compromises had been made as circumstances changed, and an atmosphere of gentle decay permeated the musical establishment. Dearnley's answer was to treat it as a great but woefully under-exploited resource: the country's largest cathedral choir, with fully professional men and the pick of the nation's choristers (education in the choir school was still virtually free of charge, and its academic record was impressive), should be able to offer music on a grand scale and of a high quality. For whatever reasons, perhaps beyond his control at that stage, he still had to achieve this with only the single weekly full rehearsal, and there were times when the choir was given too much new music to assimilate, but at its best it was capable of thrilling performances.<sup>11</sup> The tone of the boys was quickly transformed into something thin, bright, almost instrumental: their singing may be heard on a 1970 recording recently re-issued in CD format.<sup>12</sup>

The choir immediately began to undertake an unprecedented number of recordings and concerts: within Dearnley's first few months the choir had taken part in the City of London Festival, the St Paul's Today Festival and lunch hour recitals for the Church Music Trust,<sup>13</sup> and had made recordings of carols and of music for a *Son et Lumière*

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* 26-7

<sup>11</sup> Information supplied by Mr Maurice Bevan; and author's own recollections

<sup>12</sup> Karussel 450 141-2, from Argo ZRG 659: *An Elizabethan Chorus* dir. Grayston Burgess, with the Purcell Consort of Voices and instrumental ensembles

<sup>13</sup> An appeal for the choral foundations of St Paul's, Westminster Abbey and Westminster Cathedral



performance in St Paul's.<sup>14</sup> An Advent Carol Service was held for the first time in 1968,<sup>15</sup> and there was a 'large expansion of choir activity at Christmas.'<sup>16</sup> Further recordings, broadcasts, concerts and special services followed: choir and organist were congratulated by Chapter on a 'splendid' concert in the Queen Elizabeth Hall in June 1970 and a 'splendid' performance of *Messiah* later that year.<sup>17</sup> Engagements such as these had a beneficial effect on the choir's morale, and naturally the men were delighted with the additional fees earned thereby: that Chapter was strongly in favour of such activity is shown by its requesting the organist in the summer of 1971 to 'submit a memorandum on the future development and use of the choir in respect of more frequent performances in the Cathedral of major works, concerts outside and occasional tours abroad.'<sup>18</sup> He and the Headmaster replied within weeks, and as a result of their joint report Chapter made some decisions for the ensuing twelve months which in broad outline have provided a blueprint for the Cathedral's music ever since.

The long-established practice of performing large-scale works with orchestra in Advent (usually *Messiah*) and Holy Week (*St Matthew Passion*) was confirmed, but the organist was to form a Choral Society to augment the Cathedral Choir on these occasions and replace the old Special Service Choir: this had comprised the men of the Sunday Evening Choir, which by now seemed to be in its death throes, and boys from various London choirs, who had become hard to find. The Cathedral Choir would sing special music at other times throughout Holy Week 1972; and at the Holy Communion on Sundays in July it would sing Classical Masses with orchestral accompaniment, thus reviving the former use of orchestral settings at the Patronal Festival but at a time more convenient to worshippers.<sup>19</sup> The choir was to be allowed to accept overseas tours of not more than fourteen days every three years, and there should be an annual concert in the Royal Festival Hall or a similar venue every year. Mrs Tillett (of Ibbs and Tillett,

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<sup>14</sup> The author remembers it as excellent in every way, especially the choice and performance of music.

<sup>15</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 9 November 1968

<sup>16</sup> *Chapter Minutes*, 26 January 1970

<sup>17</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 27 June & 2 December 1970

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.* 13 May 1971

<sup>19</sup> In 1972 these were *Maria Theresa Mass* and *Nelson Mass* (Haydn), *Missa Brevis in D* (Mozart) and *Mass in G* (Schubert).

the well-known agents) was appointed to manage these,<sup>20</sup> and the choir duly sang at the Flanders Festival in Bruges and High Mass in St Saviour's Cathedral.<sup>21</sup>

More rehearsal time had to be found for the boys, and they were to be excused choral services in the week before Holy Week, to prepare for the extra music: the choir was also released from the 12.30 service on Fridays.<sup>22</sup> This curtailed the men's duties still further, for they had ceased to sing at Evensong on Mondays from the end of 1968, and now sang Mattins on only three weekdays and Evensong on five: in addition to this reduction in their hours of work, their pay was raised to £1,000 p.a. from 1 April 1971. The new organist had brought Mark Deller (alto) and Graham Sorrell (bass) with him from Salisbury: Grayston Burgess<sup>23</sup> moved from Westminster Abbey, possibly finding the new regime at St Paul's more attractive, but resigned after a year.<sup>24</sup> Many others came and went, but Peter Hall (tenor, appointed in 1972) is still in the choir. One Vicar-Choral was allowed to remain beyond retiring age (an alto, somewhat remarkably); but two others were given notice to quit on grounds of vocal inadequacy, though one had his salary paid for an extra three months to give him time to apply for teaching posts<sup>25</sup> and the other was allowed to remain as choir librarian: one of Dearnley's many minor reforms had been to end the system whereby the Virgers were responsible for putting out the choir's music, for since 1969 the choir librarian had assumed 'full responsibility for choir music, without prejudice to the normal control of the Church Floor by the Dean's Virger.'<sup>26</sup>

A glance through the music sung at the cathedral's services in 1972, the last year of this survey, shows that within five years something like a revolution had taken place: no other organist had effected such a sweeping transformation of the choir's repertory. He had a stated policy of including a larger proportion of contemporary music, and

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<sup>20</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*. 21 June 1971

<sup>21</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 25 January 1973

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* 7 July 1971

<sup>23</sup> Noted counter-tenor, and director of the Purcell Consort of Voices

<sup>24</sup> *Chapter Minutes*, 26 January 1970, 25 January 1971

<sup>25</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 19 October 1968

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* 2 August 1969

Geoffrey Bush, Howells and Bernard Naylor were all present in person to hear their music.<sup>27</sup> As settings of the Latin Mass were not encouraged he took considerable trouble in searching out Communion Services to the English text, such as the *Missa Salisburiensis* which Geoffrey Bush had written for his old choir, Rubbra's *Missa Cantuariensis* and Communion Service in A,<sup>28</sup> a *Missa Brevis* by Mátyás Seiber and one by William Walton, and the *Collegium Regale* setting of Herbert Howells: early English settings by Batten, Tallis and Taverner stretched the repertory in the opposite direction, as did a number of plainsong Masses; and though Stanford was still sung there had been a clear-out of such settings as those by Ley, Wood and Whitlock. Evening Services by Bush, Naylor, Rubbra and Tippett were in use, but contemporary taste demanded an equal emphasis on early music, and this found expression in such grand, large-scale products of the 'Golden Age' as the First Service of John Ward, the Third Services of Batten and Tomkins, and the Verse Service of Edmund Hooper. Much the same trends governed the choice of anthems: Bairstow (except for *Let all mortal flesh keep silence*), Mendelssohn and Wood were now in eclipse, and Stanford much reduced, with Batten, Byrd and Weelkes preferred. Three motets of Gabrieli were a striking inclusion. There was also a wider selection of responses in use; and a collection of Amens for use after the Blessing on Saturdays and Sundays had been culled from all manner of sources, from the 'Golden Age' right through to Britten's *Cantata Misericordium*.

His predilection for the music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries led him to revive precisely the sort of music that Sparrow Simpson had declared unsuitable for performance in St Paul's: a worshipper under the dome straining to hear the lengthy solos in *Arise, shine, O Zion* (Greene) or *How are the mighty fallen* (Wise)<sup>29</sup> might conclude that Sparrow Simpson had been correct, though *Greene in C* and large-scale full anthems by Blow and Purcell worked well enough. What could not be gainsaid was that the choir's repertory was more truly catholic than at any time, though Chapter 'noted recently that in one week seven out of twelve anthems were sung in Latin, and

<sup>27</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 25 January 1971; report by Christopher Dearnley

<sup>28</sup> The composer's own adaptation of *Missa in honorem Sancti Dominici*

<sup>29</sup> The author writes from personal experience of the latter.

drew the Precentor's attention to this fact;<sup>30</sup> for alongside the early and the contemporary music the works of Attwood, Harwood, Nares and Smart could still be heard, and anthems by Goss and Stainer had been revived. Even Gounod's *Messe des Orphéonistes* was back in favour, for during the choristers' holidays, when rehearsal time was available, some harmonised settings of the Morning, Communion and Evening Services for men's voices were revived, including some of the better Victorian specimens such as *Bennett in D minor*, *Cruickshank in E flat* and *West in C*: plainsong with or without verses in *fauxbourdon* had to suffice for the canticles at other times, but there was almost invariably a 'proper' anthem, frequently of the English or Continental Renaissance period, rather than a few verses from the English Hymnal. The boys sang sixteenth and seventeenth-century 'short services' on Mondays, with the lower voice parts supplied by the organ: these same services were repeated in their proper SATB form on other days a few weeks later, so that the overall result was some economy in rehearsal time for the boys. Anthems on Mondays tended to be excerpts from longer works rather than those specially composed for treble voices only.

The range and quality of music during Holy Week of that year seemed to typify the re-discovery of the Victorian ideal of eclecticism:

Palm Sunday :	<i>The Crucifixion</i> (Stainer) – 100 years and one day from his appointment
Monday :	<i>Stabat Mater</i> (Palestrina)
Tuesday :	<i>The Passion according to St Matthew</i> (Bach)
Wednesday :	<i>The Lamentations of Jeremiah</i> (Tallis) – men's voices
Maundy Thursday :	<i>Missa Brevis</i> (Britten) – boys' voices
Good Friday :	<i>The Seven Last Words</i> (Haydn) with string orchestra
Holy Saturday :	Carols at the Easter Garden

Chapter expressed its pleasure at the 'excellent rendering of the Holy Week and Easter Music,'<sup>31</sup> the cathedral choir also gave a performance of Monteverdi's *Vespers* and Vivaldi's *Magnificat Ossecensis* in October, and the whole year was described as an outstanding one for the cathedral's music, with *The Observer* referring to the choir as 'one of the glories of the Church of England.'<sup>32</sup> In his autobiography Dean Sullivan paid tribute to his Organist's achievements:

<sup>30</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 4 November 1971

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* 5 April 1972

<sup>32</sup> *Chapter Minutes* 25 January 1973

Dearnley is an able, sensitive and imaginative musician who has greatly enriched our cathedral music. He uses the building wisely, and for some services moves the choir to the west, to the entrance to the dome, the transepts, the chancel steps, and into the sanctuary, a most effective position....Perhaps his most rewarding and successful innovation has been the singing of the Haydn Masses on each Sunday in July since 1972 accompanied by organ and a small orchestra. Week after week the cathedral has been packed, and deeply reverent congregations and communicants bear witness to the need met by these wonderfully satisfying acts of worship.<sup>33</sup>

The only worry was that it had all proved very expensive, though the deficit on the Music Fund was still seen as something that had to be accepted: drastic economies did not come for another decade or so.

The condition of the cathedral organ in 1968 seemed precisely similar to that of the music as a whole, for the original concept of 1872 had been dulled and confused by piecemeal alterations over the years and some less-than-satisfactory patching up since the war. Even in 1966, before Dykes Bower retired, it had been decided that the 'Willis on wheels' should be renovated against the time when the main organ had to be dismantled for overhaul, and it was at this juncture that the first break with the firm of Willis occurred; for in 1960 Chapter had expressed its 'misgivings over the cost of repairs to the organ and the delay in completing them,' and was now resolved to seek alternative estimates.<sup>34</sup> Thus began the cathedral's association with Noël Mander and his successors, albeit by accident:

The cathedral authorities, wishing to renovate the 'Willis-on-wheels' asked John Dykes Bower whether they ought not to seek a second tender, besides that of Willis. John was embarrassed, being a most loyal man, and murmured that he supposed Harrisons were also pretty good. So a letter was sent to the Harrisons who appeared in the London telephone book as having to do with organs, and found its way to Noël's desk because he had acquired the firm of Thomas Harrison which made organ parts.<sup>35</sup>...If Noël took over the little Willis he would probably capture the big Willis too. As indeed happened.<sup>36</sup>

Mander's reconstruction of the small Willis re-created the original mechanical action, added a Mixture to the Great and clothed the instrument in a case. It was mounted on a

<sup>33</sup> Martin Sullivan, *Watch How You Go* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1975), 172

<sup>34</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 21 May 1960 & 17 December 1966

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Harrison was the founder of the Harrison dynasty and founded a part-making firm in 1830: his eldest son James took over this firm; and his younger son Thomas Hugh built organs first in Rochdale and then in Durham, where he was succeeded by his sons Arthur and Harry, the famous 'Harrison & Harrison.' [Elvin, *The Harrison Story* (Lincoln, 1973), 249]

<sup>36</sup> Michael Gillingham, 'Noël Mander – some personal memories,' *Fanfare for an Organ-Builder* (Oxford: Positif Press, 1996), 39-40

steel platform and at last became truly mobile: it is usually parked at the West end of the Nave.

Christopher Dearnley had found the condition of the Grand Organ far from satisfactory, both in terms of its latest reconstruction and its maintenance by Willis, who had the temerity to contend that Dr Dykes Bower had never complained and thus the new organist must be mis-using the instrument, an accusation he was subsequently forced to withdraw.<sup>37</sup> Another routine 'patching-up' was now being proposed, which would merely perpetuate the instrument's sprawling layout and confused tonal scheme: there was no serious prospect of allowing Willis to do the work, for the firm's current work did not match up to the high reputation it had inherited from its founder.

Hostilities (the word accurately describing the cathedral's experience of dealing with Henry Willis IV) commenced in 1970 with a report by Dearnley 'concerning the difficulties with the Organ Builders,' and it was resolved that Willis be paid off and Mander engaged to maintain the organ for the next eighteen months without prejudice to Chapter's right to consult other builders or experts.<sup>38</sup> The Cathedrals Advisory Committee then stepped in and suggested that Cecil Clutton, one of the Diocesan advisers and an expert of acknowledged eminence, should make a report: it made such damning reading that Chapter 'agreed to confront Mr H. Willis with the findings of Mr Clutton,' and it was arranged that Clutton and the Surveyor to the Fabric should interview Willis.<sup>39</sup> Chapter had to be seen to be fair to Willis, a notoriously tricky customer, and thus it was finally agreed that he and two other firms should submit proposals by 1 December 1971, with the possibility of a continental firm's being consulted as well.<sup>40</sup> It was agreed early in 1972 that Willis should be dismissed and Mander should rebuild the organ;<sup>41</sup> and it was accepted that such a radical reconstruction would cost a great deal more than the routine overhaul which Willis was proposing.

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<sup>37</sup> Correspondence in 'Organ Reconstruction' file, St Paul's Cathedral library

<sup>38</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes*, 21 February & 21 March 1970

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.* 9 May, 6 & 20 June, 7 October 1970

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* 13 May 1971

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.* 2 February, 1 March 1972

Partly to silence rumours, Clutton issued a pamphlet which was sold in the cathedral and subsequently revised as work proceeded and the scheme was modified in certain details. Dearnley and Clutton also gave interviews to the press about the proposed reconstruction, including a 'recorded conversation' printed in *Organists' Review* which made it plain that the decision to rebuild was primarily due to the organ's 'mechanical condition and utter unreliability: you approach a major service with a nagging fear that something will let you down, so you can never play with an easy mind.'<sup>42</sup> There was a need to reassure devotees of the instrument, which had always been regarded as something of a masterpiece:

*NM* We've been asked about the dome tubas very often. I do assure you that they will not be altered in any way. There will be cleaning and repairs of course.

*CC* I think it worth pointing out that the reeds are not producing anything like the artistic effect that they did originally. The organ, tonally, is in a jolly bad state.

*IB* We must emphasise...that very little of the organ is sounding now as it did when Willis first put it in. Successive changes of pitch, first lowered, then raised; various reeds voiced at different times with resonators of different lengths; and we've found nearly every stop has been transposed, lengthened, or revoiced. We are to attempt to get back to the Willis sound of the period, as we know it from other instruments.

*CD* Not many people realise how much damage the organ suffered in the last war. The pipes were stored for safety in the crypt under the north transept, only to be buried under rubble when that part of the building received a direct hit. Tremendous pains were taken after the war to restore the organ to its original condition, but it was never the same. As one person who has known the organ well for fifty years told me: 'It was like seeing, or hearing, an old friend of great intellectuality after having suffered a severe stroke'.<sup>43</sup>

The reconstruction set out to restore the chancel division to something like its 1872 state as a complete instrument in its own right, independent of the sections in the dome, for Mander had a high respect for the best work of the Victorian builders: various accretions were removed and the Solo was reduced in size to permit the reinstatement of an adequate Pedal organ. Clutton's influence resulted in the provision of a Positive division of faintly continental style with mutations and a low-pressure trumpet, an addition to the organ typical of the 1970s: space for this had conveniently become available within the north case through a decision to move the organ console to a position from which the organist could hear better what he was doing. The second-hand Lewis diapason chorus in the south-east quarter-gallery of the dome was replaced by a brand-new chorus 'of pronounced melodic quality' (i.e. extremely loud), placed with the

<sup>42</sup> Dearnley, 'St Paul's Cathedral Organ: the next century,' *Organists' Review*, July 1973, 11

<sup>43</sup> Noël Mander, Cecil Clutton, Ian Bell, Christopher Dearnley, *ibid.*

other ranks of the Dome division in the north-east quarter-gallery: at Mander's suggestion a similar chorus was provided at the west end of the cathedral to assist congregational singing; and fanfare trumpets of striking appearance and tone were placed in the west gallery. The work was completed in 1977, some part of the organ having always remained playable: the mechanism and nearly all the soundboards of the organ were completely replaced; and it has proved a conspicuous success, especially in the hands of its regular players who know how (and when *not*) to employ the sections located in the dome. From personal experience the writer can vouch for the comfort and convenience of the console, with everything accessible despite the instrument's size, and the comprehensiveness and flexibility of the specification. The only serious omission is an enclosed heavy reed on the Solo, an effect called for in choral accompaniment but lost when the 1900 Trumpet was transferred to the dome in the 1972 scheme: such a stop might well take the place of the French Horn, added by Willis in 1930 and so soft as to be well-nigh useless, as he himself admitted at the time.<sup>44</sup>

It had been by no mean certain that the organ would be reconstructed in this form. Fundamental questions were asked about its most effective siting; and there were suggestions that it should be divided between the two transepts, or that more of it should be placed in the dome galleries, or that Wren's chancel screen should be re-created, though at the entrance to the chancel rather than in its original position one bay farther east. Noël Mander was especially keen on this last idea, and expended considerable effort in attempting to prove that the 1872 scheme could be contained within a restored screen organ: the chancel would have continued to be used for weekday services, and as if to reinforce this point an artist's impression shows the choir processing in under the organ.<sup>45</sup> 'A combination of liturgical considerations and conservatism defeated the proposal,'<sup>46</sup> but that is a criticism which ignores the fact that the eucharistic liturgy of the day was still focussed on the high altar, decked out with an impressive baldacchino as recently as 1958, and that the regular use of an altar under the dome lay some time in the future. The same questions had been asked a century ago, and then Sparrow Simpson had reluctantly come to the conclusion that there was no alternative to placing

<sup>44</sup> Henry Willis, 'The Reconstructed Organ in St Paul's Cathedral,' *The Rotunda*, Autumn 1930, 4

<sup>45</sup> Preserved in bound volume *The Organ of St Paul's Cathedral* in the cathedral library

<sup>46</sup> Nicholas Thistlethwaite, 'The Work of N. P. Mander 1945-1983,' in *op. cit.* (1996), 72



the organ at the entrance to the chancel: with similar reluctance Chapter now resolved 'not to proceed with any scheme to erect or provide a screen for the organ. The Treasurer and Archdeacon voted against this decision.'<sup>47</sup>

It had been the concern of the Victorians to bring the whole building into use, and to provide a choir and organ of sufficient size and capability to serve its vast spaces. A century later this latter aim had been fulfilled by the dome and west end choruses of the revitalized instrument, and Stainer's ideal of a century previously could be fulfilled, as the roof echoed with 'the uplift voice of the hearty congregation'<sup>48</sup> whose singing could at last be kept in time and in tune. His other ideals had been modified in detail, but had proved remarkably durable, apart from the Sunday evening 'parish' service which various attempts at up-dating failed to protect from ultimate extinction: lovers of Anglican and Gregorian music alike could still find much to please them in the music of the daily services, even if these were no longer sung on every morning and evening throughout the year; and oratorio (or other music, not always specifically 'sacred') with orchestra could be heard regularly, it being accepted that the twentieth century could find in these performances a spiritual experience which formal worship might not provide. In 1872 the Victorians had accepted and maintained the principle of two choral services each day, but from the outset their execution had been impossible without makeshift and expedient: half-choirs during holidays, or men-only and boys-only services, diluted the musical standard; and the demands of the choristers' schooling and the men's holidays, coupled with the latter-day inability of the cathedral's finances to pay the Vicars-Choral a full-time salary, saw the ultimate abandonment of the principle altogether. Rather than be content with this remnant of the cathedral choir's former sole occupation, Organist and Chapter enlarged its activities to encompass recordings, concerts and tours, to 'bring the cathedral to the people,' as was apt to be said at that time. The Modern Cathedral Choir had come into being.

<sup>47</sup> *Weekly Chapter Minutes* 14 December 1971

<sup>48</sup> Stainer: Address to Leeds Congress; in *The Choir* 26 October 1872, 258

## SUPPLEMENT

### THE SERVICES WITH ORCHESTRA AT THE PATRONAL FESTIVAL AND THE FESTIVAL OF THE SONS OF THE CLERGY

Much research remains to be done into the music performed on these occasions. Holy Communion was sung by the Cathedral Choir alone with orchestra at the Patronal Festival, but for Evensong on that day the choir was considerably augmented by men and boys from other London choirs: settings of the canticles with orchestral accompaniment were composed specially, or existing ones were orchestrated by the cathedral's musicians, and the anthem was a selection from Mendelssohn's *St Paul*, except in 1932 and 1933 when an orchestral programme with an anthem was given instead. Evensong at the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy was similar, but the anthem was a well-known short cantata or a specially-commissioned work. It is regrettable that many of the full orchestral scores cannot now be traced, though it may be that some will come to light: the re-discovery of Macpherson's orchestration of *Parry in D* was encouraging, and Dr Francis Jackson is re-creating *Bairstow in D* from such parts as have survived.

## SERVICES

The location of the Full Score is given (in brackets) where known

### Communion Services (Patronal Festival)

BEETHOVEN in C 1893, 1900-03, 1909, 1915, 1922, 1928, 1934

DVOŘÁK in D 1905, 1908, 1910, 1912, 1914, 1921, 1927, 1931

GOUNOD *St Cecilia* 1894-8

MACPHERSON in E flat 1907, 1916, 1920, 1925 (*RCM*)

MARTIN in A 1899, 1904, 1913, 1918, 1923

MOZART in B flat 1933

SCHUBERT in B flat 1929, 1935

SCHUBERT in G 1889, 1930, 1932, 1937, 1939

STANFORD in B flat 1890, 1891

STANFORD in G 1938

WEBER in E flat 1892, 1906, 1911, 1917, 1919, 1924

# SUPPLEMENT : SERVICES AND ANTHEMS WITH ORCHESTRA

## SERVICES cont'd

### Evening Services

(p = Patronal Festival, Feast of the Conversion of St Paul, 25 Jan.; s = Festival of the Sons of the Clergy,  
\* = Jubilee of the Infant Orphans Association, 1877)

BAIRSTOW in D 1922p, 1923s, 1929s, 1937ps  
BARNBY in E flat 1881s, 1889s, 1904s, 1911p (*British Library*)  
BENNETT in A 1890p, 1891s, 1898p, 1901s, 1910p, 1912p, 1919s, 1923p (*RCM*)  
BENNETT in G 1899s  
BRIDGE in G 1903s  
CALKIN in G 1882p, 1897s (*RCM*)  
DYSON in D *orch. D. Hopkins* 1935s, 1939p (*RCM*)  
ELVEY, Stephen in A 1873p  
FANING, Eaton in C 1878s, 1880p, 1882s, 1885p, 1887p, 1894p, 1895p,  
1902s, 1908p, 1910s, 1916p, 1922p (*RCM*)  
FOSTER, Myles Birket in A 1883s, 1900p, 1900s (*RCM*)  
GADSBY in C 1875p, 1884s, 1895s, 1902p (*RCM*)  
GADSBY in F 1892s  
GRAY in G 1933p, 1934s  
HAYNES in G 1903p, 1906s, 1915s, 1927s, 1929p  
HUNTLEY in E flat 1908s, 1913p, 1914s, 1917s, 1921p, 1924s, 1928p  
LEE WILLIAMS in C 1891p, 1894s, 1897p, 1905s, 1912s, 1915p, 1920p, 1922s, 1930s, 1935p (*RCM*)  
MARCHANT in C 1931s, 1932p (*St Paul's*)  
MARTIN in A 1878p, 1879s, 1885s, 1892p (*St Paul's*)  
MARTIN in C 1877p, 1884p, 1887s,  
MARTIN in G 1896s, 1916s, 1919p, 1927p  
OUSELEY in F 1879p, (*pub. Novello: copy in author's possession*)  
PARRY in D (No. 2) *orch. Macpherson* 1925ps (*Dr Jeremy Dibble & author*)  
PROUT in E flat 1876p,  
SELBY in A 1899p (*RCM*)  
SMART in B flat *orch. Martin* 1890s, 1901p, 1911p, 1913s, 1917p, 1920s (*St Paul's*)  
STAINER in A 1874p, 1876s, 1877\*, 1889p, 1906p, 1909s  
STAINER in B flat 1886s, 1888p, 1893s, 1905p  
STANFORD in A 1880s, 1883p, 1886p, 1893p, 1898s,  
1907ps, 1914p, 1918ps, 1924p, 1926s, 1931p, 1932s, 1938p (*Novello*)  
STANFORD in C 1926p, 1928s, 1930p, 1933s, 1934p, 1939s (*Stainer & Bell*)  
STEGGALL in C 1881p, 1888s, 1896p, 1904p, 1909p  
THORNE in D 1877s,  
WALMISLEY in D minor 1936s, 1938p

### ANTHEMS SUNG AT THE FESTIVAL OF THE SONS OF THE CLERGY

(\* = Jubilee of Infant Orphans Association : P = Patronal Festival)

ALCOCK God is our refuge 1924  
ALCOCK When the Lord turned again the captivity 1912  
BACH Sleepers Wake 1900  
BAIRSTOW Lord, thou hast been our refuge 1917 (*Dr Francis Jackson*)  
BEETHOVEN Hallelujah Chorus 1900,03,07,09,11,13,15,18,20,22,24,27  
BENNETT, G. J. On the Morn of Easter Day 1895 (*RCM*)  
BENNETT, W. Sterndale Woman of Samaria 1894  
BREWER God within 1928 (*Gloucester City Library*)  
CARSE Praise the Lord, O my soul 1926, 1927  
DALE A song of praise 1923  
DARKE O Lord thou art my God 1931, 1933p  
ELGAR Give unto the Lord 1914, 1935 (*Novello*)  
FANING, Eaton When the Lord turned again the Captivity of Zion 1904  
GOUNOD Out of darkness (*De Profundis*) 1893

SUPPLEMENT : SERVICES AND ANTHEMS WITH ORCHESTRA

ANTHEMS *cont'd*

- GOUNOD The Redemption 1890 (*RCM*)  
 GRAY What are these that glow from afar? 1920, 1932p, 1938  
 HANDEL Dettingen Te Deum 1884  
 HANDEL Hallelujah (*Messiah*) 1873, 1908,10,12,14,16,17,19,21,23,25,28  
 HANDEL Let the bright Seraphim 1918  
 HANDEL Zadok the Priest 1902  
 HARRIS The heavens declare 1930  
 HARWOOD Jesu, thy boundless love to me 1909  
 HAYDN Creation (selections) 1888  
 HILLER All they that trust 1881, 1901  
 HILLER Song of victory 1883  
 IRELAND Greater Love 1922, 1939 (*Stainer & Bell*)  
 LEE WILLIAMS O Lord, thou art my God 1906  
 LEY Lo, round the throne 1929  
 LLOYD, C. H. O give thanks 1907  
 MACPHERSON If Christ be not raised 1905  
 MACPHERSON Sing unto God 1919, 1937  
 MARCHANT Ye holy angels bright 1925, 1934 (*St Paul's*)  
 MARTIN Hail, gladdening light 1908  
 MENDELSSOHN As the hart pants 1874  
 MENDELSSOHN Elijah (Selections) 1876  
 MENDELSSOHN Hymn of Praise 1873, 1877\*  
 MENDELSSOHN Lauda Sion 1886  
 MENDELSSOHN The Martyrdom of St Stephen (*St Paul, 3-11*) 1896  
 MENDELSSOHN O come let us worship 1889  
 MENDELSSOHN When Israel out of Egypt came 1882  
 PARRY At a Solemn Music 1902, 1910, 1932 (*Novello*)  
 PARRY God is our hope 1913 (*RCM*)  
 SCHUBERT Miriam's Song 1877, 1898  
 SPOHR God thou art great 1878  
 SPOHR How lovely are thy dwellings 1880  
 SPOHR The fall of Babylon 1892  
 SPOHR The Last Judgement (selection) 1875  
 STAINER A prayer for the Queen and Nation 1887  
 STAINER Daughter of Jairus 1879 (*J. F. R. Stainer*)  
 STAINER Lord, thou art God 1897, 1911, 1915  
 STAINER St Mary Magdalene 1885 (*RCM*)  
 STANFORD Choral Overture, Ave atque Vale 1909  
 STANFORD The Lord of Might 1903  
 SULLIVAN Love not the world &c. & No chastening &c. 1891  
 VAUGHAN WILLIAMS Lord, thou hast been our refuge 1921  
 WADELY Christ is our corner-stone 1936  
 WESLEY, S. S. Blessed be the God and Father 1899  
 WESLEY, S. S. The Wilderness 1916, 1933 (*RCM*)

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