

## HISTORY OF THE GLORIANA CHOIR

### Introduction

Two local amateur musicians, Alfred Safhill and Gerald Gostling, old Cathedral Choristers respectively of Southwark and Norwich, had in mind, for many years, the formation of a choral group which could tackle works beyond the capabilities of the average Church or Evening Institute Choir, and which for this and other reasons were not performed locally. The idea brewed for many years from the end of the War in 1945. The spur, which gave impetus to the practical carrying out of the idea, was the need to raise funds for the rebuilding of the organ in Plumstead Parish Church (St. Margaret's), where Gerald Gostling had been acting Organist from 1940 – 1946, and Organist from 1948.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1953, the Parochial Church Council resolved to launch an appeal for £2000. It occurred to the founders that concerts given in St. Margaret's, for this cause, would serve a dual purpose in giving a reason for putting on the Concerts and an object to which proceeds could be devoted.

The initial recruitment for the new Choir, at present un-named, was undertaken from among musical friends of the founders, whose circles overlapped to some extent, and who would be keen to further the objects of the new venture in music-making. It transpired that the nucleus was drawn from members of several neighbouring Church Choirs.

At first, meetings were held under the title of 'Music Club' at the house of Mrs. A. M. Shaw and at Plumstead Vicarage, singing music from Southwark Diocesan Festival Books and other items loaned by the Cathedral Library.

It was essential that the debut of the Choir should be well prepared for. The programme was chosen and rehearsals began with the object of giving a performance in St. Margaret's on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1953.

Meantime, in order to show goodwill and to inculcate the idea of special music in Church, recitals<sup>1</sup> were given on two Sunday evenings after Evensong, by musicians who were to figure constantly and prominently in the later affairs of the Choir. Among these were Beryl Hatt, who has always been a stalwart and generous friend of the Choir, and who has so often graced our performances with great distinction; Tom Thompson, the violinist, who was to become leader of the orchestra formed by him to support the Choir; Frank Pickles, the cellist who, from the start, had been a regular and distinguished member of the orchestra. The first meeting of the Music Club was on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1953, at the Vicarage. Meetings continued at intervals until, in May, the Choir began to rehearse in St. Margaret's Church on Sunday evenings. In June, rehearsals were held on Saturdays up to 27<sup>th</sup> June, when there was a break.

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<sup>1</sup> Programme Lists for these appear as Appendix 1

It had been agreed that Alfred Safhill should be Choirmaster, and that Gerald Gostling would be Organist and Accompanist and Assistant Choirmaster. It was considered advantageous to put the actual performances in the hands of a Guest Conductor, and we were fortunate in that Gerald Wheeler, Music Master of St. Olave's Grammar School and assistant Sub Organist of St. Paul's Cathedral, agreed to take charge.

Before very long it was necessary to give the new Choir a name. Among those suggested and rejected were "Alfred Safhill Singers", "Orlando Singers". In recognition of 1953 as the Coronation Year of Queen Elizabeth II, and having in mind a name given to her illustrious namesake, Elizabeth I, the Choir adopted the name "GLORIANA".

It was a matter of policy to aim at the highest artistic standards and to attempt no performance unless it could be done really well. This principle was applied to the publicity matter, posters and programmes, which were put in hand in August 1953. In this connection, the Blackheath Press Ltd., and particularly Mr. Davis (sic), co-operated very well in producing, at reasonable cost, a poster and programme of distinction.



The woodcut, which adorns the poster and programme, depicting Elizabeth I, Gloriana herself, is the work of John Moorhouse, a local artist of Eltham, who generously allowed a block to be made from his original.

At the beginning of September, the publicity drive began. Posters were distributed to all local churches for display, and programmes were put on sale at 2/6 (12½p).

Saturday evening rehearsals began on September 5<sup>th</sup>, and on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> September was the first rehearsal with Gerald Wheeler, who conducted further rehearsals with the orchestra on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, and Choir and Orchestra on 26<sup>th</sup> September. Notices appeared in the local press, Kentish Independent and Eltham Times, as the debut of the Gloriana Choir approached. On Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> October there was a final rehearsal at 6.30 and the Concert of HARVEST FESTIVAL MUSIC was given at 7.45 to a full Church. Appreciation was generous, the artistic success was assured, the Organ Fund had benefitted by over £20.00. The Gloriana Choir had made its first impact on the musical life of the district.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Press notices are reproduced as Appendix 2

## AFTER THE FIRST CONCERT

During the Autumn of 1953, practices resumed at St. Margaret's Church during alternate Saturdays and Sundays, beginning on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October. The first concert programme bore the announcement of Christmas Festival Music to be given on January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1954. The first practices of the series were devoted to the Christmas Music from Messiah. Carols, which were to provide the second half of the programme were added from Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> November. By 26<sup>th</sup> November, the draft programmes and posters were sent to the press, the soloists and conductor having been engaged. Once again, Mr. Gerald Wheeler was to be guest conductor and he held rehearsals on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December and on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> December.

On the day of the concert, there was an Orchestral call for 6.15. It was great misfortune, that a dense fog descended in the early evening, and, although all the performers groped their way to Church, the number in the audience was small. Those who came were rewarded by an excellent performance which fully upheld the standard set by the first concert. Nothing daunted, the details of the next programme were worked out on the following day – 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1954.

The sale of programmes and donations merely covered expenses.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Press notices appear as Appendix 3

## THE THIRD CONCERT: PASSION MUSIC, APRIL 10<sup>th</sup> 1954

Then encouraging reaction to the first two concerts led to more ambitious plans for the third concert, which was to include the Passion Music from Messiah and excerpts from St. Matthew Passion by J. S. Bach. In the latter work, two choruses and two orchestras are scored, and the problems of dividing our rather slender resources were discussed at a meeting on January 13<sup>th</sup> 1954.

Rehearsals began on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January, and were held on Saturdays or Sundays at St. Margaret's Church up to 28<sup>th</sup> March.

Constance Watkins, soprano, Mary Brownings, (contralto), Alfred Safhill, (tenor), and Jack Gray, (bass), were engaged as soloists. Mr. Ernest Dumayne, a well-known member of Southwark Cathedral Choir, kindly agreed to be guest conductor.

A conductor's rehearsal was held on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> April and an orchestral rehearsal on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> April. As in former instances, there was a soloists and orchestral rehearsal on the day of the concert at 6.00 pm.

The performance reached the accustomed good standard, a fair audience attended and a profit of £5.00 resulted.<sup>4</sup>

## AFTER THE THIRD CONCERT

An announcement appeared on the programme of the Third Concert that the next Concert would be given in the Autumn of 1954, a vague statement by comparison with previous announcements, and one, which in the event, was not to be fulfilled.

After reviewing the results of the Third Concert from the financial aspect and consideration of future prospects, a meeting of the Choir was called for May 15<sup>th</sup>, at Plumstead Vicarage, The members were asked to bring "Samson", which was the work intended to be performed in the Autumn.

Rehearsals of the work began and were held off and on through the Summer. They proved inadequate for the proper preparation and diary notes of the two proposed dates for the performance, 25<sup>th</sup> September and 23<sup>rd</sup> October, were cancelled.

It is interesting to note that rehearsals were for the first time held on Wednesdays. A further diary note records a list of candidates for a Choir Committee, of whom Mrs. Bailey, Mrs. Shaw, Mr. Leigh and Mr Ungoad were elected, together with Mr. Safhill and Mr. Gostling.

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<sup>4</sup> Press notices appear as Appendix 4

Rehearsals were resumed on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> August and continued irregularly until a more definite resumption in preparation for the Carol Concert on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> November.

Having in mind the small attendance at the Christmas Concert on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, it was agreed to repeat the programme of Carols, but with Advent Music from Messiah, and to hold the Concert before Christmas, on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> December.

Owen Grundy, (bass), Alfred Safhill, (tenor), and Joyce Honner, (oboe), were the soloists, and the conductor, Gerald Wheeler.

In spite of the altered date, the attendance was only fair, the financial result amounting to just over £1.00, but, musically, the standard was maintained.

#### REGAINING THE INITIATIVE

Following the initial success of the first year, it appeared that impetus had been lost during 1954, and it was very important to find ways and means to attract a following without sacrificing the artistic policy for which the Choir was founded.

Early in 1955, on January 12<sup>th</sup>, the Committee met and again on February 14<sup>th</sup>. From discussion which ensued, the programme for the fifth concert emerged in the following pattern:

The Choral items would be Handel's Sixth Chandos Anthem – "O Praise the Lord with one consent", together with part of "Samson", which had been proposed for the previous Autumn. So faith was kept. The orchestral item would be a Concerto by J. S. Bach, and the concert would be announced as a Bach-Handel Concert on May 21<sup>st</sup> 1955<sup>5</sup>.

Gerald Wheeler was again the guest conductor, and through his good offices and by courtesy of Messrs Harrods and the kind help of Mr. William de Blaise, a harpsichord by de Blaise was made available for the concert to be played by Miss Felicity Cozens. The introduction to Mr. de Blaise not only assured the success of this concert, but had the invaluable effects upon the scheme for the rebuilding of St. Margaret's Organ, which was then in preparation<sup>6</sup>.

Rehearsals began on Sundays, on January 16<sup>th</sup>, and continued regularly, with and occasional Saturday call. Gerald Wheeler took two rehearsals on May 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, and the soloist and orchestral rehearsal on the day of the concert.

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<sup>5</sup> Press notices appear as Appendix 5

<sup>6</sup> This matter is perhaps outside the immediate concern of this account, but it should be recorded that not only did the Gloriana Choir contribute financially to the Organ Fund, but, through their activities and the influence of Mr. de Blaise, such an outstanding, enlightened and economic scheme was accepted for the Organ.

The other soloists engaged for the Bach-Handel Concert were Beryl Hatt, (soprano), Lambton Wilkinson, (counter tenor), Alfred Safhill, (tenor) and Owen Grundy, (bass).

In order to make up in some measure for missing the Autumn Concert, a Sunday evening Recital was given on Passion Sunday, March 27<sup>th</sup> 1955, by the Choir and the d'Amore Strings with Alfred Safhill, (tenor). The Choir performed choruses from Messiah to accompaniment of String Quartet and Organ.

The Strings played three other items.<sup>7</sup>

Another artistic success was recorded and a good audience attended. Because of the increased expenses involved, there was, sadly, no profit to show.

On Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> April the Choir met at Shrewsbury House for a Social Evening, admirably run by Frank Swindell. Features of the evening, which were to set the pattern for many similar functions, were games of skill, brain teasing competitions, a splendid buffet organized by Ruth Safhill and Helen Miles, and a sing-song of secular part songs. Everybody thoroughly enjoyed letting their hair down, including Wilcock<sup>8</sup> and Gostling with crazy piano duets.

#### AUTUMN CONCERT 1955

The Bach-Handel Concert restored the fortunes of the Choir and paved the way for a more ambitious work for the Autumn Concert. The choice fell on "The Creation" by J. Haydn, and it was resolved to add brass and wind players to the strings for the performance. In addition to our Beryl Hatt and Alfred Safhill, we were fortunate to secure, as bass soloist, Mr. Ranken Bushby. His appearance at this concert was one of his first, and since he has reached the front rank of bass singers in this country.

Rehearsals began on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June and continued regularly until July 17<sup>th</sup>.

After the holiday break, rehearsals were resumed on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> September, with additional Thursday practices.

The Choir Committee met at 232, Burrage Road on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September.

Gerald Wheeler, once again our guest conductor, took the rehearsal on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October and the soloists and orchestral rehearsal on the day of the concert.

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<sup>7</sup> The programme for the Concert appears as Appendix 6

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Wilcock was, for a time, Assistant Organist under Gerald Gostling at St. Margaret's Church.

The performance was tape recorded by "At Home Recordings" (Mr. Peter Addinsell) from which discs were cut and are in the possession of members of the choir.

The performance was well received and highly appreciated. In spite of the higher expenses involved, there resulted a profit of £4.0.0. for the Organ Fund<sup>9</sup>.

It is interesting to note that this concert was the last with the old organ. The instrument was dismantled on November 7<sup>th</sup> and not heard again until after the rebuilding and dedication on September 15<sup>th</sup> 1956.

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<sup>9</sup> Press notices appear as Appendix 7

## THE END OF THE FIRST CHAPTER

Immediately after the "Creation" performance, on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October 1955, the proposed Carol programme was discussed and additions made to the repertoire.

On Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> October the rehearsal session was devoted to hearing the tape recording of "Creation".

Rehearsals resumed the normal pattern on Sundays at St. Margaret's Church, but without the use of the Organ which was dismantled on November 7<sup>th</sup>. The Committee met on November 10<sup>th</sup> at 370, Well Hall Road.

The forthcoming Christmas Concert marked the end of a chapter and the beginning of the widening influence of the Choir. The end of the chapter records the last appearance, as guest conductor, of Gerald Wheeler and the widening circle is marked by our going to perform in the neighbouring church of St. Mark, Plumstead. This change of venue was brought about partly because of the rebuilding of the organ in St. Margaret's and also in fulfillment of one of our aims 'to assist local causes', not only St. Margaret's, and to make the Choir more widely known.

Again we were fortunate in securing, on generous terms, a famous soloist, Gordon Clinton, (baritone) and this enabled us to perform, in addition to our Carol repertoire, the Fantasia on Christmas Carols by R. Vaughan Williams. The other soloist, whom we were equally fortunate to secure was Stephen Nye, (oboe). Gerald Wheeler conducted rehearsals on December 11<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and also on the 16<sup>th</sup>, the day of the Concert<sup>10</sup>.

Mr. Addinsell was again in attendance and made a recording of the performance, and several members have discs cut from the tape.

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<sup>10</sup> Press notices appear as Appendix 8



## PROGRESS CONTINUES

The first appearance of the Choir in 1956 was at St. Margaret's when a programme of unaccompanied Carols was given on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> January after Evensong.

Breaking fresh ground, we went to St. James', Plumstead on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> January and repeated the Carol Programme.

The Choir Social at Shrewsbury House, on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January, was an opportunity to express our appreciation and good wishes for the future of Gerald Wheeler. The Choir owes much of its success to his expert direction and ability to inspire in performance. We also had the pleasure of congratulating him on gaining the Diploma of Fellow of the Royal College of Organists. On behalf of the Choir, Alfred Safhill made a presentation of a baton case.

At the Easter concert, it was decided to perform a longer excerpt from J. S. Bach's St. Matthew Passion and rehearsals began on January 29<sup>th</sup>. We were glad to know that John Williams, Organist of St. Mark's, Hamilton Terrace, would be guest conductor. He took rehearsals on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> March and 18<sup>th</sup> and on the day of the Concert (24<sup>th</sup> March) at St. Margaret's<sup>11</sup>.

Two new names were added to the list of soloists who have sung with the Choir: Bridget Strong, (contralto) and Sheila Polglase, (soprano). In the absence of the organ, about which the press reporter made so much, (See Appendix 9) the continuo part was played on a piano.

The post mortem discussion of the Passion Music performance was on April 16<sup>th</sup> and future plans and possibilities were considered.

On May 12<sup>th</sup> a Musical Evening was held at Shrewsbury House for the purpose of singing secular music.

It was on May 23<sup>rd</sup> that a most interesting prospect opened. John Crawford, in the course of business, had met, from time to time, Mr. Peter Pears. More recently, in conversation, the activities of the Gloriana Choir came up. Mr. Pears promised Mr. Crawford that, if the Choir would agree to perform the St. Matthew Passion of Heinrich Schütz, he would willingly come down and sing the Evangelist, and bring a colleague to sing Christus. Such an offer must be unparalleled in amateur choir circles, and no time was lost in clinching it. The date was fixed for February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1957.

From this first introduction to Schütz, and as rehearsals proceeded, we came to appreciate the worth of the suggestion of a work and the prospect of an outstanding musical experience to come. Because of the need to concentrate on proper preparation of this work, and the Dedication of the Reconstructed Organ

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<sup>11</sup> Press notice and riposte appear as Appendix 9.

at St. Margaret's on September 15<sup>th</sup> at about the time of our Autumn Concert, we made plans for two Carol programmes; one at St. Margaret's on December 20<sup>th</sup> and the other at St. Luke's, Eltham on December 22<sup>nd</sup><sup>12</sup>.

The latter venue initiated a valuable link 'over the hill' and the concert was the first of many in this Church, where we enjoyed a good welcome and splendid support.

#### THE YEAR 1957

As soon as the Christmas 1956 programmes were over, our attention turned to detailed preparation for our performance of the Schütz Passion. We learned, to our pleasure, that Thomas Hemsley, (baritone) would sing Christus, and John Williams agreed to be guest conductor. It was necessary to find soloists for minor characters and these were drawn from members of the Choir and other friends. Ruth Safhill, Agnes Shaw, (sopranos), Cyril Taylor, (alto), Alfred Safhill, (tenor), Albert Stokes, (bass).

The question of publicity was given special consideration in view of the interest we hoped would be aroused beyond our immediate neighbourhood. Special handouts were designed by Bruce Wilcock and printed by Freer and Hayter, and distributed over a wide area. An announcement appeared in the press and programmes were on sale in good time.

As a break from the more serious work, a Social Evening, run on similar lines as before by Frank Swindell, was held at Shrewsbury House on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> January.

On the following day, John Williams came down to take the rehearsal as he did on three other Sundays before the day of the concert.

On the day itself, Peter Pears and Thomas Hemsley came down in the afternoon for rehearsal with the Choir with particular regard to continuity. The rehearsal was a great experience for us all. Peter Pears had obviously lavished much thought upon the work as a whole and he made revealing suggestions, which brilliantly illuminated certain passages and gave valuable help to the singers of minor roles. His own singing of the Evangelist was a never-to-be-forgotten experience. The Choir rose admirably to the occasion, which was indeed a high spot in its history<sup>13</sup>.

The performance of the Schütz Passion set a standard of achievement which will be hard to exceed. The challenge remained to maintain it and proceed onward.

Our attention turned to a comparatively modern French work: Requiem by Gabriel Fauré, romantic in its setting and posing very different problems of performance not only for the Choir, but also in its unusual orchestration.

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<sup>12</sup> Press notice appears as Appendix 10

<sup>13</sup> Press notice appears as Appendix 11

When we first began to learn it, we did not suspect that the Fauré Requiem was to become a speciality of the Choir and that we should perform it in many places and with various accompaniments, from Organ only to the full orchestration. Requiem was studied at rehearsals on Sundays from March 10<sup>th</sup> 1957 up to the Summer break and practice continued during the Autumn from September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Instead of the Autumn Concert came an innovation in the singing of Choral Evensong at St. Margaret's on All Soul's Day, November 2<sup>nd</sup>. At this service, the canticles were to Harwood in A flat and the anthems O Lord, the Maker of all things (Mundy) and Requiem Aeternam from Requiem (Fauré).

During the year, we learned, with regret, of the closing of Blackheath Press Ltd., who had been our printers. In consequence, the printing of programmes for the Christmas Music 1957 was entrusted to Saville Press of Charlton.

The programme given at St. Margaret's on December 21<sup>st</sup> included most of the regular repertoire of carols, with solos by Owen Grundy, (bass) and a revival of the Vaughan Williams Fantasia on Christmas Carols.

#### THE YEAR 1958

Apart from regular weekly rehearsals on Sundays at St. Margaret's, the first event of note this year, was the Social Evening at Shrewsbury House on January 25<sup>th</sup>. These evenings, run on time honoured lines by Frank Swindell, have become a source of much hilarity and enjoyment to members of the Choir and their friends.

The projected performance of Fauré's Requiem did not take place until All Saints' tide for at least two reasons. Our attention was diverted, for a time, by an invitation to perform Passion Music at St. Luke's, Eltham in March and to take part in a recital at the visit of South East London Society of Organists to St. Margaret's in May.

So while we kept the Fauré ticking over, our immediate concern was for these two dates.

The Conductor at St. Luke's was to be Mr. E. H. Warrell, Organist of the Church, and soloists Daphne Voller, Gwen Ralph, Alfred Safhill, Frank Keyte. Mr. Warrell took two rehearsals at St. Margaret's on March 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> and the performance was on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> March.

At the Recital, given by Gerald Gostling on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Choir sang two items: "O Lord, the Maker" (Mundy) and "Thou wilt keep Him" (Wesley).

Another item added to the repertoire, but as yet not performed, was Parry's "I was glad".

After the Summer break, we returned, in earnest, to Fauré and fixed the date of its performance for November 8<sup>th</sup> at St. Margaret's. It was decided to use only

the Organ for accompaniment. The soloists were to be Beryl Hatt, (soprano), John Camburn, (baritone) with Alfred Safhill as conductor.

The year ended with the annual Carol Programme at St. Margaret's on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December, with Eric Barnes, (tenor) as soloist and conductor, Alfred Safhill.

#### THE YEAR 1959

The year 1959 saw the Choir ranging still farther afield, beginning with a visit to another neighbouring church, All Saints', Shooters Hill, where a programme of Carols was given on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1959. Gerald Gostling was the Organist and Alfred Safhill conducted.

On Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> January, we went to St. Peter's Church, Streatham, S. W. 16 to take part in an Organ and Choral recital arranged by Frederick Waterman. The Organist was Alwyn Surplice (Winchester Cathedral), who played solos and accompanied. The soloists were Moyra Cronin, (soprano) and Frederick Waterman, (baritone), who, with the Choir, performed Requiem (Fauré). Alfred Safhill conducted.

The Annual Choir Social Evening was held on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> February at Shrewsbury House, when a highlight was a performance of Toy Symphony by J. Haydn.

The weekly rehearsals were devoted to Requiem (Fauré) and Elijah (Mendelssohn) in preparation for the next two events in the diary.

On Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March, we visited St. Oswald's Church, Norbury for another performance of Requiem (Fauré). Alfred Safhill conducted with Gerald Gostling (Organ). (The names of the soloists on this occasion are lost.) The performance was nearly a catastrophe since the car bringing two tenors failed to arrive and the situation was saved only because we had imported additional singers to strengthen that line.<sup>14</sup>

On Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April was the first of a series of performances in co-operation with Welling Civic Choir, when we sang Elijah at Bexley Grammar School. The soloists were Barbara Trend, (soprano), Ethel Stamford, (contralto), Alfred Safhill, (tenor) and Owen Grundy, (bass) with the Orchestra led by Edwin Smith, conducted by Leonard Povey.

Regular rehearsals continued from May 3<sup>rd</sup> until June 14<sup>th</sup> and resumed, after the Summer break, on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September at St. Margaret's.

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<sup>14</sup> "REQUIEM" (Faure) 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1959, NORBURY

This performance became an ad hoc affair. Doris Sibley soprano, who was to sing the solos, arrived with acute laryngitis and, at short notice, Alfred Safhill sang "Pie Jesu" and conducted. The bass soloist (name lost) Organist of St. Oswald's helped out the altos in the chorus work.

This part of the year appears to have been fraught with frustration: diary entries, which were one by one erased, suggested performances of "Creation" on October 3<sup>rd</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup>; of "Requiem" on November 7<sup>th</sup>; of "Requiem" or "Creation" on November 14<sup>th</sup>, none of which was fulfilled.

The Autumn programme was disrupted because of small attendances at rehearsals due to an epidemic of sickness.

The year ended with Carols at St. Margaret's on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> December, when soloists in Christmas Music from Messiah were Ruth Safhill, (soprano), Eric Barnes, (tenor), Owen Grundy, (bass) with the Orchestra led by Tom Thompson, Gerald Gostling (organ), conducted by Alfred Safhill.

Among the Carols were several additions to the repertoire.

On Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> December, a shorter version of the same programme was given at All Saints' Church, Shooters Hill, when Gerald Gostling played the organ and Alfred Safhill conducted.

#### THE YEAR 1960

On Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> January, at Shrewsbury House, was held another Choir Social Evening, with impromptu musical items and party games. Among the refreshments the party shared a cake specially prepared to mark the gaining of the Diploma of Associate of the Royal College of Organists by Gerald Gostling.

The first Concert of the year was to be a performance of parts II and III of "Messiah" in co-operation with Welling Civic Choir, at St. Margaret's, on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Rehearsals for this proceeded weekly on Sundays at St. Margaret's.

The soloists were Beryl Hatt, (soprano), Ethel Stamford, (contralto), Alfred Safhill, (tenor), Leonard Green, (bass), with String Orchestra led by John Farnon, Gerald Gostling, (organ), conducted by Leonard Povey.

On Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May, we visited yet another Church and gave a miscellaneous Recital at St. John's Church, Plumstead.<sup>15</sup>

What is described in the Minutes as "the First Annual General Meeting of the Choir", was held at 232, Burrage Road on May 29<sup>th</sup>, when important matters affecting the future of the Choir were discussed. It was decided to try to get accommodation for rehearsal in the more comfortable and intimate surroundings of the Vestry of All Saints' Church, Plumstead.

In due time, this was arranged, a suitable fee agreed and rehearsals began at the new venue on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June and continued on Sundays thereafter.

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<sup>15</sup> Programme appears as Appendix 12

When the Woolwich Council of Churches was seeking a choir for their first United Service in the shell of the Garrison Church, the Gloriana Choir was invited to sing on Sunday evening, the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1960.<sup>16</sup> This event concluded events for the Summer.

When rehearsals began after the Summer recess, on September 18<sup>th</sup> 1960 in All Saints' Vestry on Sundays, several events were proposed for the 1960 – 61 Season. Among these were performances of "Requiem" (Fauré), Carols and a full-scale version of "St. Matthew Passion", (Bach) in March.

The pattern of Social events was varied by holding a Supper and Social at Shrewsbury House on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> October. An excellent meal was provided by Ruth Safhill and Helen Miles and the function was pronounced a complete success.

At the beginning of November, it was noted that the performance of "St. Matthew Passion" would be on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1961, in co-operation with the Festival Singers, conducted by Leonard Povey.

The performance of "Requiem" (Fauré) was at Christ Church, Shooters Hill on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November, and marked a further addition to our list of places visited. The programme included "Two Psalms" (Gustav Holst) and two anthems by Wesley and Stanford. The soloists were Ruth Safhill, (soprano), Jack Gray, (bass) with Gerald Gostling, (organ) conducted by Alfred Safhill.

The last event of the year was a Carol programme at All Saints', Shooters Hill conducted by Alfred Safhill with Gerald Gostling, (organ). The programme included four of "Six Carols for Sundry Seasons" by Peter Crossley Holland.

It was given on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> December.

## THE YEAR 1961

The energies of the Choir were now concentrated on the most ambitious performance attempted so far: Bach's "St. Matthew Passion". This was to be given at St. Luke's Church, Eltham Park on March 25<sup>th</sup>. Much larger forces would be employed in Choir and Orchestra and help was enlisted from the Festival Singers, conductor Leonard Povey and Kidbrooke School Senior Choir, conductor Joyce Lang. among the woodwind players we were happy to see William and Mrs. de Blaise playing flutes, thus renewing acquaintance of some years ago. The Orchestra was led by Tom Thompson and Frank Pickles played cello continuo with E. H. Warrell at the keyboard. Soloists were Beryl Hatt, (soprano), Gwen Ralph, (contralto), Alfred Safhill, (tenor), Owen Grundy, (bass) and the conductor was Leonard Povey.

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<sup>16</sup> Programme appears as Appendix 13.

The Woolwich Council of Churches' United Service at the Garrison Church was held on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> June. The Choir was again invited to take part and sang two items.<sup>17</sup>

We were again invited to St. Luke's, Eltham Park for a performance of "Requiem", (Fauré) preceded by a revival of "Sixth Chandos Anthem" (Handel) on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October. Soloists were Beryl Hatt, (soprano), Owen Grundy, (bass) with the Orchestra led by Tom Thompson, E. H. Warrell (organ) conducted by Alfred Safhill.

On December 21<sup>st</sup>, we visited the Methodist Church, Crayford to sing a programme of Carols. Sidney Grout, (tenor) was soloist, the accompanist was E. H. Warrell and conductor Alfred Safhill.

A similar programme was given at All Saints', Shooters Hill on December 29<sup>th</sup> when the accompanist was Michael Semple.

#### THE YEAR 1962

Again, a Social event opened the calendar of the year, when a Dinner was held at Shrewsbury House on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> January. This was a formal affair, with three courses and wines, but a minimum of speeches so that the frivolity of the after-proceedings should not be long delayed.

Mr. E. H. Warrell, having left St. Luke's, Eltham Park, had become Organist of St. John the Divine, Kennington. We were invited to perform at this church on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> February. The programme included Passion Music from "Messiah" and "Requiem" (Fauré). The soloists were Beryl Hatt, (soprano), Juanita Pentelow, (contralto), Lawrence Watts, (tenor), Geoffrey Shaw, (baritone) with the Orchestra led by Tom Thompson, E. H. Warrell, (organ) conducted by Alfred Safhill.

On March 24<sup>th</sup>, some members of the Choir enjoyed a visit to the Celebrity Concert of Thurrock Male Voice Choir of which Alec Goodall and Alfred Safhill were members.

The list of places visited was further increased by a performance, on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> April at St. Michael's Church, Wilmington. The programme included items from "Requiem", (Fauré), "Messiah", Motets and Passiontide Choral Preludes. The soloists were Ruth Safhill, (soprano), Hazel Rogers, (contralto), Sidney Grout, (tenor), Gerald Gostling, (organ) conducted by Alfred Safhill.

Through the good offices of E. H. Warrell, we were invited to combine with King's College Singers (London) in a performance of "Messiah" Parts I and II and of "Requiem", (Fauré) on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> May at King's College Chapel in the Strand. This brought the number of performances of "Requiem" to seven. Soloists were Beryl Hatt, (soprano), Juanita Pentelow, (contralto), Alfred Safhill, (tenor), Owen

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<sup>17</sup> Programme appears as Appendix 14.

Grundy, (bass) with Orchestra led by Charles Thorgilson, John Wilbraham, (trumpet), E. H. Warrell and Gerald Gostling, (organ), conductors E. H. Warrell and Alfred Safhill. The performances were notable on account of the excellent playing of the Orchestra, drawn from the ranks of the Royal Artillery Orchestra.

Since the beginning of the year, rehearsals at All Saints' had been held on Mondays.

The Annual United Service at the Garrison Church was held on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July. The Choir was again in attendance and sang "From all that dwell below the skies" by Walmisley.

Arrangements were concluded for the Choir to take part in the October Festival to be held at Hillingdon, Middlesex and, in particular, to sing with the Sine Nomine Singers in a performance of "Nelson Mass" by J. Haydn on Trafalgar Day. Copies of the music were provided, on loan, by Middlesex County Council. The performance would be conducted by Michael Rose, who came to take a rehearsal at All Saints' on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> October. The Choir attended a combined rehearsal with the other Singers at St. Stephen, Gloucester Road on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October. We travelled to Hillingdon on Sunday afternoon of October 21<sup>st</sup> for rehearsal with the Orchestra. We were entertained to tea in groups by members of Sine Nomine Singers and the performance was at All Saint's Church after Evensong. In addition to "Nelson Mass", Gloriana Choir sang two motets of Stanford, and Sine Nomine Singers sang "The voice out of the whirlwind" by R. Vaughan Williams.

The Pro Musica Orchestra played extremely well. Soloists were Christine Armstrong, (soprano), Evelyn Williams, (Mezzo soprano), Alfred Safhill, (tenor), Alan Webster, (bass) with Derek Stevens, (organ), Shirley Barraclough, (leader) and conductor, Michael Rose.

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, All Saint's Day, the Choir gave a short Recital at All Saints' Church, Shooters Hill.

The closing months of the year were filled with dates which, for one reason or another, had to be cancelled. But, in spite of this, plans were being laid for further co-operation with Sine Nomine Singers in the New Year. In anticipate of this, the Choir attended a combined practice at the Church of St. Andrew by the Wardrobe, London, on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> November, conducted by Michael Rose.

One date, which was kept, was Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> December, when a Recital was given in the Hall of Christ Church, Shooters Hill. The Vanburgh Quartet played Brahms' Clarinet Quintet in B minor, Op. 115. (The name of the solo clarinetist is not recorded.) The Choir sang Carols and Christmas Hymns. the soloists were Hazel Rogers, (contralto) and Sidney Grout, (tenor).

The proposed Carol Recitals at St. Mary, Abchurch on December 18<sup>th</sup> and at St. Martin, Ludgate Hill on December 27<sup>th</sup> were cancelled.



## THE YEAR 1963: TENTH ANNIVERSARY

A severe cold spell, which began after Christmas, was responsible for the cancellation of the Christmas programme, which was to have been given at All Saints' Church, Shooters Hill on January 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The continuation of the cold weather prevented rehearsals in All Saints' Vestry and work continued in the comfort of 60, Eaglesfield Road until the beginning of March.

The Choir Dinner was held at Shrewsbury House on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> January. Ruth Safhill and Helen Miles, who were responsible for the catering, are to be congratulated upon the excellence of the meal. Frank Swindell thought up some more diverting activities for our entertainment and there was some rip-roaring singing of secular songs.

The first important Concert of the year was a performance of "Messiah" at Woolwich Town Hall on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April, sponsored by the Friends of St. Nicholas Hospital. In this, we were joined by members of Sine Nomine and other singers to augment the Choir. This event was to be followed, immediately, by a Recital, again with Sine Nomine Singers, at the Church of St. Andrew by the Wardrobe on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April and a Recital at All Saints', Shooters Hill on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April. These performances and the necessary rehearsals accounted for one of the busiest ten days in the history of the Choir, which ran as follows:

On Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April, there was a combined rehearsal of "Stabat Mater", (Palestrina) at St. Andrew by the Wardrobe.

On Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April, there was an orchestral rehearsal of "Messiah" at Woolwich Town Hall.

On Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April, the performance of "Messiah" took place at Woolwich Town Hall, conducted by Michael Rose.

On Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April, there was a Recital with Sine Nomine Singers at the Church of St. Andrew by the Wardrobe.

On Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April, there was a Recital with Sine Nomine Singers at All Saints', Shooters Hill.

(Here the account of the History of the Gloriana Choir, by Gerald A. Gostling, ends)



**APPENDIX 1 (continued)**

RECITAL, SUNDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> MARCH, 1953

Aria: Art thou troubled	G. F. Handel
My heart ever faithful	J. S. Bach
Chorale Prelude: I cry to thee	J. S. Bach
Recit: Thy rebuke hath broken	
Aria: Behold and see	
Recit: He was cut off	
Aria: But thou didst not leave	G. F. Handel
Wechsend Lied und Lust	Trio
Alleluia	W. A. Mozart
Ave Maria	Bach-Gounod

BERYL HATT (Soprano)

ALFRED SAFHILL (Tenor)

STRING TRIO: TOM THOMPSON (Violin)

JEAN ROSS (Viola)

FRANK PICKLES (Cello)

G. A. GOSTLING (Organ)

## APPENDIX 2

HARVEST FESTIVAL MUSIC, OCTOBER 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1953

### PRESS NOTICES.

#### NEW PLUMSTEAD CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA

“For its first public performance the Gloriana Choir and Orchestra will present a programme of Harvest Festival Music at St. Margaret’s Church, Plumstead, on October 3 (7.45 p.m.).

The Choir and Orchestra were organized by a group of local people who wish to perform works seldom heard in the district, and to assist local causes. Their first concert will be in aid of the Organ Restoration Funds of St. Margaret’s Church.”

Kentish Independent 25.9.53

#### GLORIANA

“With the object of performing sacred music well. a number of music-lovers in Sidcup and Eltham area have banded themselves together as the Gloriana Choir and Orchestra, and are to give their first concert this Saturday at St. Margaret’s, Plumstead at 7.45 p.m.

For this occasion, they have chosen Harvest Festival music, and the programme includes the anthem “Lift up your heads” (Kitson); the motet “Exultate Jubilate” (Mozart), which Miss Beryl Hatt will sing; Bach’s cantata “Let songs of rejoicing be raised”; and excerpts from Haydn’s “Creation”.

Mr. Gerald Wheeler, sub-organist of St. Paul’s Cathedral, will be the conductor, with Mr. T. Thompson, leader of the Orchestra and Mr. G. A. Gostling at the organ, and the soloists will be Beryl Hatt, (Soprano), Alfred Safhill, (Tenor) and Leonard Green, (Bass).”

Kentish Times 2.10.53

## **APPENDIX 2 (continued)**

HARVEST FESTIVAL MUSIC, OCTOBER 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1953

### PRESS REPORTS

#### GLORIANA CHOIR'S PROMISING DEBUT

“Under the scholarly baton of guest conductor, Gerald Wheeler, (sub-organist of St. Paul's Cathedral), the Gloriana Choir and Orchestra gave masterly renderings of 18<sup>th</sup> Century choral works for their first public performance at St. Margaret's Church, Plumstead, on Sunday.

Starting somewhat cautiously, Choir and Orchestra gradually warmed up and proceeded to attack every number with great vitality.

Highlight of the evening was the Motet, “Exultate Jubilate” by Mozart, beautifully sung by Beryl Hatt (soprano), and sensitively accompanied by the Orchestra, under the leadership of Tom Thompson.

Numbers from “The Creation”, by Haydn, were rendered with a competence and sureness of intonation, that indicated conscientious choral training by the Choir's founder, Alfred Safhill.

Soloists were Beryl Hatt (Soprano), Clair Tyler (Contralto), Alfred Safhill (Tenor), and Leonard Green (Bass).

The Concert was in aid of the Church's Organ Fund.”

Kentish Independent 9.10.53

## **APPENDIX 2 (continued)**

HARVEST FESTIVAL MUSIC, OCTOBER 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1953

### PRESS REPORTS

#### MUSIC LOVERS GIVE FIRST CONCERT

#### NEW CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA FORMED

“A fine performance of Harvest Festival music was given by the newly-formed Gloriana Choir and Orchestra, when members held their first concert at St. Margaret’s, Plumstead, Parish Church on Saturday.

The Choir and Orchestra was (sic) recently formed by a number of music lovers in the Sidcup and Eltham area, with the object of performing works which are not often heard in the district and to assist local causes. Saturday’s Concert was in aid of the Organ Restoration Fund of St. Margaret’s. Response was good. An additional item to the programme was Donald Wheeler’s performance of the end of Telemann’s Viola Concerto in G major. The work was played with a full round tone and perfect phrasing. Choir and Organ blended well in Kitson’s anthem “Lift up your heads”. In the cantata, “Let songs of rejoicing be raised”, by Bach, with Choir and Orchestra, opportunity was given to the soloists.

Beryl Hatt, soprano, effectively reached her high notes without sacrificing sweetness of tone, while to the contralto solo, Clair Tyler, brought a mellow quality of voice. The high tenor part was capably managed by Alfred Safhill, whose voice was well suited. Leonard Green, bass, has a rich, tuneful voice without harshness.

Beryl Hatt was, perhaps, at her best in the motet “Exultate Jubilate” by Mozart.

The programme concluded with rousing excerpts from “The Creation” by Haydn, including “In splendor bright”, “The heavens are telling”, the trio “On thee each living soul awaits” and “Achieved is the glorious work”, with the soloists, Choir and Orchestra.

The Guest Conductor for the evening was Gerald Wheeler, sub-organist of St. Paul’s Cathedral. Tom Thompson was leader of the Orchestra while the Organist was G. A. Gostling.”

Kentish Times 9.10.53

### **APPENDIX 3**

CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL MUSIC, JANUARY 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1954

#### PRESS NOTICES

##### ITEMS OF INTEREST

“The newly-formed Gloriana Choir and Orchestra will present a programme of Christmas festival music at St. Margaret’s Church, Plumstead, on January 2.”

Kentish Independent 24.12.53

#### PRESS REPORTS

##### GLORIANA CHOIR’S SECOND CONCERT

“Although they have been formed for less than a year, the Gloriana Choir and Orchestra have already mapped out a very definite policy for themselves.

This local group, which is based upon St. Margaret’s Church, Plumstead, has now about thirty members and has already given two concerts. The last was on Saturday evening, when nearly 100 people groped their way through the thick fog, paid their 2s. 6d., (12½p.) and seated themselves in the centre aisles of the nave.

The programme was not entirely devoted to the classics. The 90 minute’s programme was varied, catering for all tastes, and everyone, including the audience, was given a chance to show his skill.

Christmas music from “The Messiah”, with Ruth Safhill (soprano), Mary Browning (contralto) and Jack Gray (bass) gave way to “Once in royal David’s city” in which the audience joined. Pearsall’s arrangement of “In Dulci Jubilo” was followed by Corelli’s Oboe Concerto in F major, arranged by Barbirolli, and played by Joyce Honner.

Many were the words of praise spoken after the concert and a good deal of the credit for these must go to Alfred Safhill, the Choirmaster and the conductor, Gerald Wheeler, who obtained, from the Choir, well balanced melody, instead of just lusty singing.

All the money raised by the group is for charity and so far they have contributed £25.00 to St. Margaret’s Organ Fund. Their next engagement will be a caocert of Passion Music to be held at St. Margaret’s in April and they hope to present at least three concerts a year.”

Kentish Independent 10.1.54

### **APPENDIX 3 (continued)**

#### GLORIANA'S CHRISTMAS MUSIC

"It was unfortunate that fog affected the attendance of listeners at the second recital by the Gloriana Choir and Orchestra, which was given at St. Margaret's Church, Plumstead on Saturday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> ult. Nevertheless, the audience of about one hundred people, thoroughly enjoyed the programme.

The first half of the programme consisted of the Christmas music from Handel's "Messiah". The soloists were Ruth Safhill, soprano, Mary Brownings, contralto, and Jack Gray, bass, and they and the Choir and Orchestra gave an interpretation which was more in the spirit of the work than many performances heard from much larger bodies. It is hoped that this emphasis on quality, rather than quantity, will continue to be the policy of this excellent little group.

The second half consisted mainly of carols ranging in period from pre-Bach to contemporary composers. The audience joined in three well-known ones and, without rehearsal, they felt the persuasive effect of Gerald Wheeler's baton. This young conductor has, for sometime, been responsible for the music at St. Paul's Cathedral and, without ostentation, obtains good effect from the singers and players.

Some particularly noteworthy features of the music were: the presence of some male alto tone in the Choir, which makes all the difference to the inner parts, and a common weakness in choirs; the woodwind of the orchestra, often lacking in small groups; and the support of the organ, played by Gerald Gostling

This instrument is sadly in need of rebuilding, but no one, unfamiliar with this fact, who had not played the organ, would know what struggles the player has with the antiquated tracker action – the playing was good, the registration just right.

One of the woodwind players, Joyce Honner, played the Oboe Concerto in F major by Corelli with skill and confidence.

Tribute is due to Alfred Safhill, the Choirmaster, for the training he gives and to the other artists mentioned above.

The money raised is for local good causes and already over £25.00 has been contributed towards St. Margaret's Organ Fund.

The next performance by the group will be a concert of Passion Music, and will be well worth attending."

MARK KNIGHT, A.R.C.O.  
Blackheath Guide, 6.2.54



#### **APPENDIX 4**

PASSION MUSIC, APRIL 10<sup>th</sup>, 1954

#### PRESS REPORT

“The Gloriana Choir and Orchestra, which was formed last year with the object of performing works to a high standard not often heard locally, gave a recital of Passion Music in St. Margaret’s Church, Plumstead, on Saturday.

The Programme included excerpts from the “Messiah”, Bach’s “Passion according to St. Matthew”, and Mozart’s Suite for Strings (given as an orchestral selection).

The Orchestra was led by Mr. Tom Thompson and the Choir was conducted by Mr. Ernest Dumayne. Mr. Gerald Gostling was at the organ.”

Kentish Independent, 16.4.54

## **APPENDIX 5**

BACH-HANDEL CONCERT, MAY 21, 1955

### PRESS REPORT

CONCERT BY GLORIANA CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA

"A Bach-Handel Concert was given in St. Margaret's Church, Plumstead, on May 21<sup>st</sup>, by the Gloriana Choir and Orchestra conducted by Mr. Gerald Wheeler.

The Concert began with Handel's Sixth Chandos Anthem, "O Praise the Lord with One Consent". Bach's Concerto in A major for harpsichord and strings, beautifully played by Miss Felicity Cozens, harpsichordist, completed the first half of the programme. The harpsichord by William de Blaise was by courtesy of Messrs. Harrods, Ltd.

Soloists were Miss Beryl Hatt, soprano; Mr. Lambton Wilkinson, counter tenor; Mr. Alfred Safhill, tenor, who is also the Choirmaster, and Mr. Owen Grundy, bass. Mr. G. A. Gostling was at the organ.

This Choir, which is an excellent one, amply justified itself in the chorus work. The whole Concert was most enjoyable."

(Contributed)  
Kentish Independent 3.6.55

## APPENDIX 6

RECITAL, PASSION SUNDAY, MARCH 27<sup>th</sup>, 1955

FROM MESSIAH

Handel

Chorus: Surely he hath borne our griefs

Recit: All they that see him (Tenor)

Chorus: He trusted in God

Recit: Thy rebuke hath broken his heart (Tenor)

Aria: Behold and see (Tenor)

Recit: He was cut off (Tenor)

Aria: But thou didst not leave (Tenor)

Chorus: Lift up your heads

ALFRED SAFHILL (Tenor)

GLORIANA CHOIR

D'AMORE STRINGS

G . A. GOSTLING (Organ)

Overture: "The Power of Music"

William Boyce

Prelude and Fugue in G minor

J. S. Bach

Concerto Grosso in G minor

Charles Avison

D'AMORE STRINGS

## APPENDIX 7

THE CREATION, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15<sup>th</sup>, 1955

### PRESS REPORT

“Although Canon R. G. Morecombe, Vicar of St. Margaret’s, Plumstead, had often heard numbers from Haydn’s “The Creation”, he had never heard the entire work. On Saturday, after the Gloriana Choir and Orchestra had given a really competent performance of the oratorio, the Canon said how pleased he was to have at last heard it in its entirety. The Canon was not strictly correct in thinking that he did, for there were the usual sensible cuts in the Gloriana’s offering.

In saying that, the performance was good, one is certainly not overstating. The small orchestra was particularly fine and the Choir proved that they had been extremely well drilled both by their Choirmaster, Alfred Safhill, and the conductor, Gerald Wheeler.

Mr. Safhill sang the solo tenor part, investing “In native worth and honour clad” with power. The part of Gabriel was sung by Beryl Hatt with sweetness; her singing of the popular “With verdure clad” was nicely controlled. Ranken Busby’s recitative work displayed a keen knowledge of that most difficult form.

A tape recording of the performance was taken.”

Kentish Independent, 21.10.55

## **APPENDIX 8**

CHRISTMAS MUSIC, DECEMBER 16<sup>th</sup>, 1955

### PRESS NOTICE

#### CAROL CONCERT AT ST. MARK'S PLUMSTEAD

"A concert of carols will be given in St. Mark's Church, Plumstead, at 8 p.m. on Friday, December 16<sup>th</sup>, by the Gloriana Choir and Orchestra.

The programme will include Oboe Concerto by Cimarosa and Fantasia on Christmas Carols by Vaughan Williams. The distinguished baritone, Gordon Clinton, will take part and the oboe soloist will be Stephen Nye.

The conductor will be Gerald Wheeler, who will be making his last appearance before taking up the appointment of Organist at St. Matthew's Church, Ottawa."

Kentish Independent 9.12.55

### PRESS REPORT

#### GLORIANA CHOIR SHOW EXCELLENT BALANCE AND RANGE

"A programme of Christmas music was given at St Mark's, Plumstead, on Friday, by the Gloriana Choir. The Choir, trained by Alfred Safhill, sang four groups of unaccompanied carols together with a careful selection of Christmas motets, all of which showed, to advantage, the Choir's excellent balance and range.

This was well illustrated in Sweelinck's great 17<sup>th</sup> Century "Hodie Christus natus est", beautifully contrasted with the delicate singing of "The Infant King".

Gordon Clinton, baritone, sang the aria "Mighty Lord" from Bach's "Christmas Oratorio", and then joined with the Choir in "Three Kings from Persian Lands".

The large congregation joined in singing hymns between the groups of carols. The guest conductor – for the last time for at least several years: he is taking up an appointment as an organist in Ottawa – was Gerald Wheeler. G. A. Gostling was at the organ, and Tom Thompson was leader of the Orchestra."

Kentish Independent 23.12.55

## APPENDIX 9

### PASSION MUSIC, MARCH 24, 1956

#### PRESS REPORT

##### THAT ESSENTIAL ORGAN WAS NOT PRESENT

“An organ is essential to all religious music whether it be a humble hymn or a mass choral work, its roaring suggestion of power and celestial-type cadences are of the very essence of Christianity, and there is no doubt that the lack of organ accompaniment detracted from an otherwise admirable performance of Handel’s “Messiah” and Bach’s “St. Matthew Passion” by the Gloriana Choir and Orchestra at St. Margaret’s Church, Plumstead, last Saturday. The organ at St. Margaret’s is still under reconstruction.

Though Gerald Gostling, standing in for the organ, on the piano, performed well, a harpsichord might have been more effective. Excellent performances by all the soloists were frequently drowned by the Orchestra in its efforts to provide the fullness normally suggested by the organ. Sheila Polglase singing “O know that my Redeemer liveth” was particularly enjoyable, her clarity and diction ideally suited this type of music. Bridget Strong (contralto), Choirmaster Alfred Saffhill (tenor) and Rankin Bushby (bass) left nothing to be desired.

The St. Matthew Passion is full of traps for the more modest performers, and was inclined to emphasize the occasional poor tone and lack of attack by the chorus. But generally the performances were good, the pizzicato and bass passages by the string bass were a delight to hear, and the woodwinds were particularly praiseworthy.”

Kentish Independent 30.3.56

The above press report called forth the following letter from Mr. Bruce Wilcock to the Editor of the Kentish Independent, but he did not publish!

“Dear Sir,

The people of Plumstead are a dull lot and your readers’ legs doubtless need pulling occasionally, but your amateur music critic has attempted far too hearty a tug in the current issue.

On page six, under the heading “That Essential Organ Was Not Present”, he (or she?) opens his contribution by blandly informing us that the organ is essential to all religious music – a statement hardly calculated to inspire confidence in the writer’s of musical history (Has he never heard of plainsong?) But this is merely a preliminary flourish to prepare us for a sublime description of the organ’s tonal resources: its “roaring suggestion of power and celestial-type cadences”. I am forced to admit that I have yet to discover what a celestial-type cadence sounds like; perhaps, like the lost chord, it will be heard again only in Heaven.

Having shattered any illusions we may have cherished about his musical qualifications, your critic plunges gaily and with equally disastrous consequences, into theology, to declare that all unimaginable sounds are “of the very essence of Christianity...”

After such an onslaught, we are prepared to read anything and to believe nothing. Such verbal acrobatics are diverting – too diverting, unfortunately; few will have read about the concert. and still fewer will have taken it seriously. A great pity; for the local newspaper is the obvious medium for presenting news about local music-making.”

## **APPENDIX 10**

CHRISTMAS MUSIC, DECEMBER 22, 1956

### PRESS REPORT

“Jubilee Crusaders of St. Luke’s, Eltham Park, will be joined by a powerful ally tomorrow (Saturday) when the 30 – strong Gloriana Choir of Plumstead cross the hill to give a concert of Christmas music and help raise funds for their £5000 restoration scheme.

Started in Coronation Year by Gerald Gostling and Alfred Safhill, former Choristers of Norwich and Southwark, the Gloriana Choir soon became very proficient, attracting choristers from a wide area to sing in local churches such as St. Margaret’s, St. James’ and St. Mark’s, Plumstead. Leader of the Gloriana Choir and Orchestra in tomorrow’s performance at St. Luke’s Church, Westmount Road, Eltham, will be Tom Thompson, and solos will be sung by Alfred Safhill, tenor and Owen Grundy, (bass). Mr. G. A. Gostling, the talented organist of St. Margaret’s and Mr. J. H. Portis will take turns at the St. Luke’s organ.

The concert of Christmas Music will begin at 7.30 p.m.”

Kentish Independent 21.12.56



## **APPENDIX 11**

ST. MATTHEW PASSION, 23<sup>rd</sup> FEBRUARY, 1957

### PRESS NOTICE

#### FAMOUS SOLOISTS AT PLUMSTEAD

“A performance of the St. Matthew Passion by Heinrich Schütz will be given in St. Margaret’s Church, Plumstead on Saturday, February 23, at 8 p.m.

The part of the Evangelist will be sung by Peter Pears and of Jesus by Thomas Hemsley, with the Gloriana Choir conducted by John Williams.

The first visit to Woolwich of two so eminent soloists is worthy of note, and the performance promises to be an outstanding success.”

Kentish Independent, 22.2.57

## **APPENDIX 12**

ST. JOHN'S, PLUMSTEAD, MAY 19<sup>th</sup> 1960

I was glad	Parry
Thou wilt keep him	Wesley
Two Psalms	Holst
The heavens are telling	Haydn

G. A. Gostling (Organ)

Conductor: Alfred Safhill

## **APPENDIX 13**

GARRISON CHURCH, JULY 3<sup>rd</sup> 1960

O Come ye Servants	Tye
Glorious and powerful God	Stanford

## **APPENDIX 14**

GARRISON CHURCH, JUNE 25<sup>th</sup> 1961

Blessed Angel Spirits	Tschaikowsky
Thou wilt keep him	Wesley

## **APPENDIX 15**

ALL SAINTS', SHOOTERS HILL, NOVEMBER 1<sup>st</sup> 1962

PROGRAMME FOR ALL SAINTS' TIDE

Blessed be the God and Father	Wesley
Beati quorum	Stanford
Justorum animae	Stanford
If with all your hearts	Mendelssohn
Sidney Grout (tenor)	
Alfred Safhill (conductor)	

## **APPENDIX 16**

PROGRAMME FOR HOLY WEEK, APRIL 9<sup>th</sup>, 1963

Deus misereatur	Schütz
Passion Music from "Messiah":	
Part II	
I know that my redeemer liveth	
Since by man came death	
Ruth Safhill (soprano)	Hazel Rogers (contralto)
Sidney Grout (tenor)	
Alfred Safhill (conductor)	

## **APPENDIX 17**

ST. PANCRAS PARISH CHURCH

Passion Music from "Messiah"

In conjunction with Fred Waterman's Choir

Alfred Safhill sang tenor solos and conducted

## **APPENDIX 18**

### **CHURCH IN ISLINGTON**

Performance with Fred Waterman's Choir.





1961

MARCH 25 ST. MATTHEW PASSION, ST. LUKE'S

JUNE 3 RECITAL AT ST. LUKE'S

JUNE 25 SERVICE AT GARRISON CHURCH

OCTOBER 28 FAURÉ REQUIEM, ST. LUKE'S

DECEMBER 21 CAROLS AT CRAYFORD

DECEMBER 29 CAROLS AT ALL SAINTS'

1962

FEBRUARY 24 MESSIAH & FAURÉ REQUIEM, KENNINGTON

APRIL 17 RECITAL, WILMINGTON

MAY 15 MESSIAH & FAURÉ, KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON

JULY 22 SERVICE IN GARRISON CHURCH

OCTOBER 21 NELSON MASS AT HILLINGDON

DECEMBER 11 CONCERT, CHRIST CHURCH HALL

1963

APRIL 4 MESSIAH, WOOLWICH TOWN HALL

APRIL 8 RECITAL, ST. ANDREW BY THE WARDROBE

APRIL 9 RECITAL, ALL SAINTS'

SEPTEMBER 29 HARVEST SUPPER, ST. LUKE'S

DECEMBER 18 CAROL CONCERT, WOOLWICH TOWN HALL

DECEMBER 21 CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL AT LOUGHTON

DECEMBER 22 TENTH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT – SCHÜTZ CHRISTMAS  
STORY

1964

MARCH 23            CONCERT CRAYFORD METHODIST CHURCH  
MARCH 24            CONCERT ST. ANDREW BY THE WARDROBE  
OCTOBER 11          REJOICE IN THE LAMB  
                         BRUCKNER MASS E MINOR AT HILLINGDON  
OCTOBER 31          CONCERT MULGRAVE SCHOOL  
DECEMBER 13        CHRISTMAS ORATORIO AT ST. LUKE'S, ELTHAM

1965

FEBRUARY 17        INSTITUTE CONCERT AT WOOLWICH TOWN HALL  
APRIL 4              PASSION MUSIC, ALL HALLOWS  
MAY 6                BEXLEYHEATH METHODIST  
OCTOBER 23         CONCERT, LOUGHTON  
OCTOBER 31         KOMM, JESU, KOMM, STRAVINSKY ? AT HILLINGDON  
DECEMBER 6         MOTETS & FAURÉ REQUIEM AT ST. MARGARET'S

1966

FEBRUARY 23        BEXLEYHEATH METHODIST GUILD  
MARCH 27            ST. MATTHEW PASSION AT ALL HALLOWS  
APRIL 6              RECITAL AT ST. LUKE'S  
JULY 2                RECITAL AT EMSWORTH  
OCTOBER 2          HILLINGDON FESTIVAL, GOTTES ZEIT, ETC.  
DECEMBER 11        CAROLS AT ALL HALLOWS  
DECEMBER 19        CAROLS AT ST. LUKE'S



1967

MARCH 13 GOTTES ZEIT, ETC. AT ST. LUKE'S  
JULY 1 GOTTES ZEIT, ETC. AT EMSWORTH  
JULY 16 VERDI SACRED PIECES AT ST. CUTHBERT'S, PHILBEACH  
GDNS  
OCTOBER 8 RUBY SHAW MEMORIAL SERVICE  
NOVEMBER 17/18 WEEKEND OF MUSIC AT WOOLWICH INSTITUTE  
DECEMBER 17 CAROLS AT ALL HALLOWS  
DECEMBER 18 POWELL ?, CAROLS AT ALL HALLOWS

1968

FEBRUARY 25 RUBY SHAW MEMORIAL CONCERT FAURÉ REQUIEM  
MARCH 31 EVENSONG AT ST. LUKE'S  
APRIL 28 EASTER CAROLS AT ST. LUKE'S  
JUNE 6 EVENSONG AT EMSWORTH  
SEPTEMBER 29 EVENSONG AT ALL HALLOWS  
DECEMBER 15 ADVENT CAROLS AT ALL HALLOWS  
DECEMBER 21 CONCERT AT CRAYFORD WITH THURROCK MALE VOICE  
CHOIR  
DECEMBER 22 CHRISTMAS ORATORIO AT ST. MARK'S  
DECEMBER 22 CHRISTMAS ORATORIO AT ST. MARK'S

1969

MARCH 1 CONCERT BY WOOLWICH INSTITUTE, WOOLWICH TOWN  
HALL

MAY 11 EVENSONG AT ALL HALLOWS

SEPTEMBER 28 EVENSONG AT ALL HALLOWS

OCTOBER 25 CONCERT, HIGHFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH, DARTFORD

DECEMBER 20 CAROLS AT CRAYFORD

DECEMBER 21 CAROLS AT ALL HALLOWS

1970

FEBRUARY 21 CONCERT AT GRAYS WITH THURROCK MALE VOICE CHOIR

MARCH 27 UNITED SERVICE IN WOOLWICH

MAY 9 ELIJAH WITH SIDCUP CHORAL SOCIETY

JUNE 20 TOC H THANKSGIVING AT ALL HALLOWS

JULY 15 FAURÉ REQUIEM, UPMINSTER

SEPTEMBER 19 FAURÉ REQUIEM

NOVEMBER 21 OLD CHORISTERS' EVENSONG, SOUTHWARK

DECEMBER 12 CONCERT, ALL SAINTS', BELVEDERE WITH THURROCK  
MALE VOICE CHOIR

DECEMBER 19 SCHÜTZ CHRISTMAS STORY, ST. MARK'S

DECEMBER 20 CAROLS AT ALL HALLOWS, BBC RECORDED

1971

MARCH 6 HISTORY OF CHURCH MUSIC, WELLING  
JUNE 28 END OF TERM CONCERT AT INSTITUTE  
JUNE 17 EVENSONG ST. MARGARET'S LOWESTOFT  
OCTOBER 30 CRAYFORD METHODIST HARVEST SUPPER  
NOVERMBER 1 EVENSONG, ALL SAINTS', BELVEDERE  
NOVEMBER 27 OLD CHORISTERS' EVENSONG, SOUTHWARK  
DECEMBER 19 CAROLS AT ALL HALLOWS

1972

FEBRUARY 19 CONCERT AT GRAYS WITH THURROCK MALE VOICE CHOIR  
MARCH 6 SCHÜTZ CHRISTMAS STORY, SOUTHWARK  
SEPTEMBER 19 EVENSONG, ALL HALLOWS  
OCTOBER 29 CHRIST CHURCH, SHOOTERS HILL  
NOVEMBER 25 OLD CHORISTERS' EVENSONG, SOUTHWARK  
DECEMBER 17 CAROLS AT ALL HALLOWS

1973

FEBRUARY 10 BERYL HATT MEMORIAL CONCERT, ALL HALLOWS  
APRIL 15 EVENSONG, ALL HALLOWS  
OCTOBER 5 – 7 MUSIC WEEKEND AT MOOR PARK  
NOVEMBER 24 CONCERT WITH THURROCK MALE VOICE CHOIR  
DECEMBER 16 CAROLS AT ALL HALLOWS

1974

JANUARY 4 FUNERAL OF ALFRED SAFHILL, SOUTHWARK  
APRIL 8 CONCERT, ACADEMY CHAPEL, WOOLWICH  
SEPTEMBER 29 EVENSONG, ALL HALLOWS  
NOVEMBER 30 FAURÉ REQUIEM, ALL SAINTS'  
DECEMBER 22 CAROLS, ALL HALLOWS

1975

FEBRUARY 11 CONCERT, WEST KINGSDOWN PARISH CHURCH