



CHOIR

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The Choir of Clare College
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Following a hugely successful fifteen-concert tour across Australia in August 2012, the Choir continued to build on a number of initiatives set up by the Director of Music, including its continuing partnership with recording label Harmonia Mundi USA, its representation by Ikon Arts Management, the continuation of the College's Masterclass Series, and its benefitting from the generosity of the ongoing Friends of Clare Music scheme. The Choir performed to over 20,000 in venues including Sydney Opera House and Melbourne's Hamer Hall in performances of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Australian Chamber Orchestra. Praised by critics as "warm, true, magnificent" and "a performance for the history books", the performance was awarded Best Orchestral Concert of the year by Australia's Limelight Magazine, beating off competition from the Hamburg and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestras.

The Choir's principal role of providing music for the liturgy in Chapel has offered as ever an extremely broad range of repertoire for Choir and congregations alike. In addition to the three weekly services, the Choir sang Fauré's *Requiem* for All Souls's Day, Allegri's *Miserere* for Ash Wednesday, with music for each term stretching from medieval plainchant to contemporary works, with much inbetween. Services have included numerous solo opportunities for individual members of the Choir, and have utilised all four of the Chapel's keyboard instruments. Additional instrumentalists have been brought in for such works as Byrd's *Mass for five voices*, Monteverdi's *Beatus Vir*, the première of *I do not sleep* by Composer-in-Residence Giles Swayne to mark the death of student Rebecca Chamberlin. The Dean and Director of Music continue to work closely together to plan the liturgy, and to oversee the pastoral side of the members of the Choir.

The Choir's first recording on the Harmonia Mundi USA label of *Choral Works* by Imogen Holst, released worldwide in September 2012, was hailed as "thrilling...impeccable" by Gramophone Magazine, and earned a prestigious Diapason d'Or Découverte award in France. This year, the Choir has recorded an Advent programme (March 2012) and Christmas programme (January 2013) for release in 2013/14 as the start of a major on-going series of music for the church year. The recording sessions for all recordings were produced, engineered and edited by Honorary Fellow and former Director of Music John Rutter, to whom the Choir is much indebted.

The Michaelmas Term ended with the annual Advent Carol Service and a Christmas Concert in the College Chapel, followed by a concert in Manchester Grammar School attended by many northern-based alumni, and a sell-out charity concert in Long Melford, Suffolk. The calendar year was rounded off by the Choir's annual concert at St John's, Smith Square in London, after which Timothy and Christina Benn, the patrons of the Choir's Lay Clerkship, once again kindly hosted a drinks reception.

Over the past year, the Choir has continued to participate in BBC radio performances. In December 2012 the Choir were again invited to sing on Radio 3's *In Tune* to promote the concerts in mid-December. Later in January 2013, the Choir broadcast BBC Radio 3 Choral Evensong live from Aldeburgh Parish Church in Suffolk, home of Benjamin Britten, whose centenary year is celebrated in 2013.

This year the Choir has worked with a number of distinguished musical figures and ensembles. In the Lent Term, the Choir made a return appearance with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus in a performance of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* in London's Royal Festival Hall, under the baton of Sir Mark Elder. They also performed with the Aurora Orchestra and Clare alumnus Nicholas Collon

in a performance of Bach's *St John Passion* in King's Place, London, marking the start of their Artist-in-Residence with that orchestra in 2013/14. Prior to the London performance of the *St John Passion*, the Choir staged a performance of this in the Great Hall conducted by Graham Ross, with Evangelist Nicholas Mulroy and period ensemble Clare Baroque, led by Clare alumna Margaret Faultless, with all the solo arias and recitatives taken by members of the Choir. This year the College welcomed internationally-renowned baritone Roderick Williams and Nicholas Sears, Head of Vocal Studies at the Royal College of Music, London, to give masterclasses for aspiring singers.

Collaborations with other Cambridge choirs have this year seen the Choir sing joint services with the Chapel Choirs of Jesus, Gonville and Caius and St John's Colleges. The Director of Music continues to pursue an active programme of visiting schools and welcoming visiting students and choirs to observe or join the Chapel Choir for services. This year has seen visitors from Westminster School, Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls, Dulwich College, and The Leys School, Cambridge, as well as Birmingham University Singers. In the Lent Term some musicians from the College participated in Clare's *Turtle Song*, a song-writing project working with Alzheimer's and Dementia sufferers, culminating in a performance of music written by the participants in West Road Concert Hall.

New music continues to play a large part in the Choir's performing schedule, most notably through the works of Giles Swayne, the College's Composer-in-Residence. The Choir gave the UK première of his *Uncommon Prayers* at St John's, Smith Square, following its world première, given during the Choir's tour to Australia in 2012. In 2013, the Choir will première a new carol from former Director of Music John Rutter, commissioned by Graham Ross for performance in the Advent Carol Services and the Choir's annual Christmas Concert at St John's, Smith Square, London.

In July 2013 the Choir will return to St Paul's Cathedral, London to sing Choral Evensong, and will make the next recording of Passiontide repertoire for Harmonia Mundi USA. In the long vacation they will make return appearances at London's Spitalfields Festival, Fenstanton's Fringe in the Fen festival for Macmillan Cancer Support, and Northamptonshire's Dingley Hall, before embarking on two tours across Europe with Lars Ulrik Mortensen and the European Union Baroque Orchestra performing celebratory works by Handel in Brugges, Milan, Utrecht, Hagen, Darmstadt and London.

Friends of Clare Music continues to build its resources and maintain crucial continuing links with the present Choir. This year, the Friends have funded the purchase of new music stands for the College, and supported Clare musicians in numerous musical projects both in Cambridge and outside.

2013/14 is set to be a full year for the Choir and for music in the College, with external performances in St John's, Smith Square, King's Place, LSO St Luke's, The Apex in Bury St Edmunds, and Clare Village, Suffolk. The Choir joins the Aurora Orchestra twice in the Michaelmas Term 2013, firstly in two performances of Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb*, and secondly in December performing Bach's *B minor Mass*. In January 2014, the Choir will sing as part of the annual CUMS Concert in King's Chapel under Nicholas Collon. Two possible tours to the USA are planned for next academic year, alongside invitations to perform in Malta and further concerts in Europe with the European Union Baroque Orchestra.

The recent Choral Trials, held this year under the new system imposed by the Admissions Forum, resulted in a poor number of quality applicants to Clare, with no students applying as altos or tenors. The Directors of Music are in talks once again to try and establish a safer future for choral music in Cambridge. A repeat of this year's trials poses a serious threat to the future of the Choir of Clare College, and indeed, as I mentioned last year, the entire Cambridge choral scene.

Graham Ross
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