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The Choir of Clare College continues to be regarded as one of the world's leading collegiate choirs, its busy schedule of chapel services, concerts and recordings providing an exciting and hugely rewarding experience for its Choral Scholars and Volunteers during the course of their academic studies. In addition to their principle role of providing music for the liturgy, the 2014-15 academic year has seen the Choir give numerous concerts in Cambridge, in London (including Royal Albert Hall, St. John's, Smith Square, Blackheath Halls and King's Place); and overseas in the USA (Washington D.C., Annapolis MD, New York NY) and the Netherlands (Vlissingen, Amersfoort and Nijmegen).

None of this would be possible without the tireless work of the Chapel Administrator, Choir Administrator, our recording label Harmonia Mundi USA, our representation by Ikon Arts Management, and the ongoing support of the Friends of Clare Music scheme, all of whom support the work of the Director of Music in his work to try and make Clare the very best musical environment across the University, nationally, and internationally.

In December 2014, we said a fond farewell to Reverend Dr Gregory Seach, Dean of Clare College for some seven years, as he took up his new appointment as Warden of Wollaston Theological College in Perth, Australia. His support for the Choir and all its activities both in and out of the chapel were second to none. We are very grateful to the Very Reverend Peter Judd, formerly Acting Dean and Chaplain of Clare, for expertly taking on the role of Acting Dean for both Lent and Easter Terms. We look forward to welcoming Reverend Dr James Hawkey as Dean from September 2015, joining us from Westminster Abbey. The former Dean and Acting Dean have worked closely with the Director of Music to plan the liturgy, and to oversee the pastoral side of the members of the Choir and the Chapel community.

We continue to aim to raise the profile of the Choir nationally and internationally, often re-connecting with alumni of the Choir and College through our touring activities, and in turn raising the possibility of continued collaboration and support (financial or otherwise) for the College.

Music in the Chapel has offered as ever an extremely broad range of repertoire for both Choir and congregations alike. In addition to the three weekly services, the Choir sang Maurice Duruflé's *Requiem* for All Souls' Day (which was recorded later in the year for future release on the Harmonia Mundi USA label) and James MacMillan's *Seven Last Words from the Cross* as part of the Service of Words and Music for Lent. As ever, the repertoire for each term stretches from medieval plainchant through to contemporary works and new commissions. Services have included numerous solo opportunities for individual members of the Choir, both new and returning, and have utilised not only the Chapel's keyboard instruments, but many of the College's fine instrumentalists. In November, a service of Choral Evensong was broadcast by BBC Radio 3, and the two Advent Carol Services in December proved as popular as ever. In the Easter Term 2015, the Choir gave the first performance of a newly commissioned work from leading choral composer Matthew Martin, which will be recorded in July 2015 for a future CD release with Harmonia Mundi USA.

This year also marked the launch of the Chapel's webcasting service, which allows Chapel services to be streamed across the internet through the Choir's website. Since the launch of the service in January 2015, the service has been accessed by over 2,000 users across the UK, Europe and USA,

and is generously supported by Clare alumnus Mr George Law, the Friends of Clare Music and the Foyle Foundation.

The Choir released two new recordings in 2014–15 on the Harmonia Mundi USA, label receiving critical acclaim from the national and international press. *Lux de caelo: Music for Christmas*, which served as a programme for tours to both the USA and Netherlands in December 2014, was described as 'one of the best recordings of the season' (BBC Radio 3), and was granted a four-star review by the Financial Times. *Ascendit Deus: Music for Ascensiontide & Pentecost*, released in March 2015, was praised as a 'state-of-the-art seasonal sacred recording' (All Music) and received a four-star review from BBC Music Magazine. The recording sessions for all the Harmonia Mundi USA recordings were produced, engineered and edited by Honorary Fellow and former Director of Music John Rutter, to whom the Choir is much indebted. The Choir looks forward to celebrating John Rutter's forthcoming 70<sup>th</sup> birthday at a special Evensong and Dinner in the Michaelmas 2015 term.

The Choir prides itself on its rewarding concert and touring schedule, and this year was no exception. The Michaelmas Term concluded with the annual Advent Carol Services and a Christmas Concert in Great Hall, before embarking on a tour to the USA that saw the Choir make its debut at the prestigious Library of Congress in Washington D.C, highly praised in the Washington Post. Following a concert in Maryland, the Choir was invited to perform at a College Alumni Dinner in New York City, which was enjoyed greatly by the alumni present. Upon returning to the UK, a brief appearance on BBC Radio 3 served to promote the Choir's annual concert at St John's, Smith Square in London, after which a reception was generously hosted by the College's Development Office. The final tour of the term saw the Choir return to the Netherlands for a series of sell-out engagements, performing a programme drawn from the recent *Lux de caelo: Music for Christmas* release. The Lent Term saw two concerts in London: a repeat performance of James MacMillan's *Seven Last Words from the Cross* at Blackheath Halls, before joining the Aurora Orchestra – a frequent collaborator – for a sell-out performance of Mozart's *Requiem* at King's Place.

The Director of Music and Nicola-Jane Kemp, one of the College's four distinguished singing teachers, established the inaugural Clare College Song Competition in Lent Term 2015, inviting aspiring singers and pianists from across the University to compete for a London recital opportunity and a professional concert engagement organised through an agency. The competition was judged by international countertenor Michael Chance, alongside Graham Ross, Nicola Jane Kemp, former Director of Music Timothy Brown, and artist agent Jill Davies. The winning duo was Hugo Popplewell and Matthew Jorysz, both of whom are students at Clare College.

Collaborations with other Cambridge choirs have this year seen the Choir sing joint services with the Chapel Choirs of Jesus, Selwyn, St. John's and Gonville & Caius Colleges. In October 2014, the Choir joined forces with the Choirs of St. John's, Gonville & Caius, Jesus Colleges, the University Chamber Choir and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra to perform Verdi's *Requiem* at the Royal Albert Hall, conducted by Andrew Nethsingha. In January 2015, Clare formed part of another massed Cambridge choir for a sell-out performance of Brahms's *Requiem* in King's College Chapel.

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, including a visit from the James Allen Girls School, with whom we sang a joint service in Chapel. In November 2014, we joined Jesus College Choir for an outreach concert in King's College Chapel involving the Berkshire Youth Choirs.

Friends of Clare Music continues to build its resources and maintain crucial continuing links with the present Choir. This year, the Friends have assisted the commissioning of a new work for the Choir, masterclasses for instrumentalists and the inaugural Clare College Song Competition. An anonymous benefactor has very generously donated towards a forthcoming collaboration between the Choir and a major London orchestra.

In Summer 2015, the Choir will participate in two concerts for the Gallipoli Music Memorial Trust in London and Dorset, involving collaborations with the Southbank Sinfonia, and complete their recording sessions for Harmonia Mundi USA with a programme of music for Easter. The 2015/16 academic year offers some superb opportunities for musicians at Clare, including a return visit from

the Schubert Ensemble, a live BBC Radio 3 Epiphany broadcast, two recordings for Harmonia Mundi USA, Choir concerts in Cambridge, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Exmoor, Luton, Oxford, College livings Great Gransden and St Mary's Rotherhithe, with London performances in Westminster Abbey, St John's Smith Square, St Peter's Eaton Square, Union Chapel with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Cadogan Hall with the London Concert Orchestra. The Choir is planning a tour of the Far East in September 2016, in collaboration with their agents and the Development Office, with further planned tours of the USA and Netherlands in forthcoming seasons.

Graham Ross  
May 2015