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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 2015–16 academic year has seen the Choir give numerous concerts in Cambridge, London (including Royal Festival Hall, Westminster Abbey, St John's Smith Square, St Peter's Eaton Square and Union Chapel), across the UK (Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Exmoor, Luton, Oxford) and overseas in the USA (Greensboro, NC, Lubbock, TX, Philadelphia, PA, Middlesbury, VT and New York NY).

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 Director of Music in his work to try and make Clare the very best musical environment across the University, nationally, and internationally.

In September 2015, the College welcomed Revd Dr James Hawkey to the Clare Chapel Community from his previous post at Westminster Abbey. As Dean he has taken an active role in supporting the Choir through his participation in Choir Committee, and has helped to draw the College community to experience the Chapel music through initiatives such as the College Staff Carol Service, and an inspirational set of guest preachers for Sunday sermons. With a fine tenor voice to boot, he has made a very active contribution to the music of each choral service! We have also been fortunate to have the services of Michael Papadopoulos as Assistant Organist this year, providing invaluable support to the Director of Music and the musical life of the Chapel in general. We are delighted that Michael has received an offer for postgraduate study at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

We continue 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. On tour to the USA in December 2015, Choir members performed at a University Alumni Reception at the Yale Club, New York organised by Clare's Development Office. The event was much enjoyed by all, Choir members and guests alike, and many valuable connections were made. Similar events are being planned for a forthcoming tour to Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia in September 2016. In the Lent Term 2016, current Choir members reconnected with alumni Choir members for a groundbreaking world première in the Royal Festival Hall, London with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Vladimir Jurowski. Alexander Raskatov's *Green Mass* received its first performance with the forces of one Oxbridge Choir and a major London orchestra – a feat that would be inconceivable to most other undergraduate choral groups. Another joint concert is taking place in summer 2016 and the Choir hopes to

build on these initiatives, strengthening alumni engagement with the College through the Choir. This year Official Clare Choir Alumni social media pages have been set up, and through these both London- and Clare-based reunions are being planned.

Many former members of the Chapel Choir and the musical community at Clare have this year achieved great heights in their own careers. To name but a few, former tenor Choral Scholar Alessandro Fisher (2007) and former Organ Scholar Ashok Gupta (2007) won first prizes at the 2016 Kathleen Ferrier Awards at London's Wigmore Hall – an extraordinary achievement for Clare College. Former Music student and Baroque violinist Margaret Faultless (1980) was awarded an Honorary Membership of the Royal Academy of Music: a list limited to 300 distinguished musicians who were not trained at the RAM (previous recipients include Mendelssohn, Liszt, Stravinsky and Boulez). Trombonist Michael Buchanan (2011) secured a year's contract with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, aged 23. The 2016 *BBC Proms* season is once again littered with Clare alumni, including four Proms conducted by former Clare undergraduates Sir Roger Norrington, Richard Egarr, Jonathan Cohen and Nicholas Collon. Current undergraduate Music students and Choral Scholar Joshua Pacey won the John Sanders Memorial Composition Competition for Young Composers 2016, becoming the third consecutive Clare alumnus to win this international competition, joining the Director of Music Graham Ross (2003) and William Cole (2010) as previous winners – again, another formidable achievement for Clare College.

We are extremely grateful to our benefactors. Without their support, Choir members would not experience the rich and diverse opportunities currently on offer and many of the Choir's projects and tours would be unachievable. The Choir owes particular gratitude this year to an anonymous benefactor who donated towards the Choir's collaboration with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in December 2015, as well as four anonymous benefactors who have contributed towards the Choir's forthcoming tour to Asia. The Choir is indebted to their generous support. Finally, the members of the Friends of Clare Music continue to provide invaluable benefaction to the Choir and the College, facilitating projects such as the Chapel's webcasting service – which allows weekly Chapel services to be streamed across the internet through the Choir's website – as well as an instrumental masterclass from The Schubert Ensemble and an informative talk on postgraduate studies from Nick Sears, head of Vocal Studies at the Royal College of Music.

Music in the Chapel has, as ever, offered an extremely broad range of repertoire for both Choir and congregations alike, stretching from medieval plainchant through to contemporary works and new commissions. Services have provided 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 addition to the three weekly services, the Choir sang extra services for All Souls' Day, Ash Wednesday and College Parents' Day alongside the two annual Advent Carol Services and a special Service of Words and Music for Lent. In January, the Choir's Epiphany Carol Service from Clare Chapel was broadcast live on BBC Radio 3. The Choir also celebrated the 70th birthday of former Director of Music John Rutter with a special Concert, Evensong and Dinner in the Michaelmas term. This academic year, collaborations with other Cambridge choirs have seen the Choir sing joint services with the Chapel Choirs of Gonville & Caius, Jesus, St. John's and Trinity Colleges. The Director of Music continues to pursue an active programme welcoming school students and choirs to observe or join the Chapel Choir for services, this year including Tiffin, Canterbury Girls' and Forest Schools.

The Choir released two new recordings in 2015–16 on the Harmonia Mundi USA label, receiving critical acclaim from the national and international press. The first, *Requiem: Music for All Saints and All Souls*, featuring Tomás Luis de Victoria's six-part 1605 Requiem, was praised for its 'customary accomplishment and minute attention to musical detail' by *Gramophone*. *BBC Music*

Magazine applauded the Choir's latest recording, *Haec dies: Music for Easter*, released in March 2016, describing 'performances of real quality and intelligence, by a choir which has carved a highly distinctive niche for itself amid the Oxbridge scramble'. The recording reached No. 6 in the UK Specialist Classical Charts, topped the iTunes pre-release sales and was selected by Classic FM as their Disc of the Week. Following the release *The Guardian* published an article by the Director of Music detailing his top 10 recommendations of music for Easter. The recording sessions for all the Harmonia Mundi recordings were produced, engineered and edited by Honorary Fellow and former Director of Music John Rutter, to whom the Choir continues to be much indebted.

The Choir prides itself on its rewarding concert and touring schedule, and this year has been no exception. The Michaelmas Term concluded with a brief appearance on BBC Radio 3 to promote the Choir's forthcoming Christmas concerts, followed by two performances of Handel's *Messiah* in St. John's College Chapel, Cambridge and Union Chapel, London with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. The Choir spread their Christmas cheer around the UK with December performances at the Stroud Arts Festival, in Gloucestershire in Castlemorton (via a performance at the Elgar Birthplace Museum), and at St. Mary's Church in Hay-on-Wye, before travelling to the USA for a whistle-stop tour of five States in five days, giving concerts to hugely appreciative audiences. Upon their return to the UK, the Choir gave their annual Christmas concert at St John's, Smith Square in London, after which a reception was generously hosted by the College's Development Office.

The Lent Term began with performances of music for the season of Epiphany in Westminster Abbey, St Mary's Rotherhithe, Clare College Chapel and for the Bedford Music Club. These services and concerts prepared the Choir for their recording sessions in All Hallows' Church, Gospel Oak and Tonbridge School for a forthcoming release of Music for Epiphany. The Lent Term continued with many exciting opportunities for the Choir. After singing on a BBC 2 live broadcast of a Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration, the choir visited Oxford to give a joint concert with the Choir of The Queen's College, ventured to Luton to sing at the Catholic Parish Church and finished the term with a concert of American Music to celebrate 50 years of Kennedy Scholars in St Peter's Church, Eaton Square, London.

In Summer 2016, the Choir will give concerts of 'Music for 40 Voices' with esteemed cellist Raphael Wallfisch as part of both the Spitalfields Music Summer Festival and Cambridge Summer Music Festival. The Choir will also record music for the Feast of Corpus Christi in Norwich Cathedral and Ely Cathedral Lady Chapel before embarking on an exchange with Parisian Choir Musique Sacrée à Notre-Dame Paris. The two choirs will give joint concerts in Notre-Dame Cathedral and Clare College Chapel. The Choir will give their final summer concert in Fenstanton, Cambridgeshire as part of the Director of Music's *Fringe in the Fen* Festival, before returning in September for a three week tour to South East Asia in September 2016, giving concerts, workshops, receptions and open rehearsals in Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore and Malaysia. The 2016/17 academic year offers some superb opportunities for musicians at Clare, including a Christmas tour to the Netherlands, a Lent Term Bach cantata series celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, performances of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* with Britten Sinfonia and Mahler's *Symphony No. 8* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and further opportunities for broadcasting, recording and performing across the UK and overseas.

At the end of an academic year that has seen the Choir perform to its largest global audience yet, the College is much indebted to the dedication and commitment of all members of the Choir, who continue to serve as major ambassadors for Clare in all that they do.

Graham Ross
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