

Evening Worship at St George's College, with the Winthrop Singers

On Thursday night 16th May at 6pm, members of the Council of Christians and Jews joined with students at St George's College, where Dr Michael Champion led worship based on the Anglican Evensong tradition.

The Winthrop Singers, directed by Nicholas Bannan, provided beautiful liturgical music from the Jewish tradition and during the time together we became very aware of the dependence Christian worship has on the Jewish tradition. Notes on the works sung were included in the Order of Service and provided some helpful background about the music and its composers.

Prior to the service the congregation enjoyed Mendelssohn's *G Major Prelude*, played by organist Alessandro Pittorini.

For the Introit, the choir sang *Hine Ma Tov*, a beautiful setting of Psalm 133:1. A traditional Jewish hymn based on an Eastern European melody, it was sung this time to an arrangement by Malcolm Singer, the former conductor of the Zemel Choir in London. The words of the psalm verse set the theme of the evening and were incorporated in the introductory liturgy:

"How good and how pleasant it is when people dwell in unity."

Psalm 146, *Haleluyah, Haleli nafshi* was sung to a setting by Salamone Rossi, a northern Italian contemporary of Monteverdi.

In between the two readings from scripture (Isa 55:6–13 and 1 Cor 13:1–13), the choir sang Louis Lewandowski's *Enosh Kechotzir Yomov*, a setting of Psalm 103:15–17.

The Anthem was the second movement of Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*. This work sets verses from two contrasting psalms, Psalm 23 and Psalm 2. The countertenor's amazing voice represented that of the boy psalmist David, while the choir sopranos and altos sang the comforting Psalm 23. Into this haven of peace burst the supplication of the men's chorus — "Why do the nations so furiously rage together?" (from Psalm 2) — a question which remains with us still.

This was followed by prayers, and the service concluded with the Aaronic Blessing (Num 6:24–26). After the procession had left the Chapel, the congregation then remained to listen to the organ voluntary, Mendelssohn's *G Major Fugue*.

Following the service, members of the Council were invited to the College to share a meal in the student dining room. Afterwards a "fireside chat" with students meant a crowded room of students and guests listened to and questioned Mr Ken Arkwright about his experiences in Europe during the World War and the time of the Holocaust.

It was a fascinating evening with beautiful music, fellowship over food, and a challenging discussion to end the night.

Marie E. Wilson
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