

The Winthrop Singers–CCJWA collaboration — Thursday 24 September 2020

Traditionally, the annual event featuring The Winthrop Singers has been held at St George's College, Crawley. However, as a result of weather damage to the Chapel's spire, and COVID-19 restrictions, The Winthrop Singers' weekly evensong — once it could resume after the lockdown — was temporarily taking place at Christ Church, Claremont. The Council was most grateful to the Rector, Fr Peter Boyland, to be invited to hold our interfaith evening worship service there, and that afterwards members and friends were able to gather with choristers in the Mary Lockett Hall for a light meal, and a "fireside chat" with the choir's Musical Director, Dr Nicholas Bannan.

As a consequence of coronavirus, the collaboration with The Winthrop Singers, normally held in May, fell in late September, during the Jewish High Holy Days.

Evening Worship

Reverend Jacob Legarda, Archbishop's Chaplain in the Anglican Diocese of Perth, presided at the service, which was very well attended, the church being filled to COVID capacity.

The liturgy included: organist Holly Broadbent improvising in the spirit of the occasion; readings from Micah 4:1–4 (in Hebrew and English) and 1 Corinthians 13:1–13; the hymn *Praise to the living God* (from the Jewish *Yigdal*) sung congregationally; and prayers from both Anglican and Jewish sources.

Works sung by the choir were: *Hine Ma Tov* (Psalm 133:1) arranged by Malcolm Singer; Psalm 150, *Laudate Dominum*, in chant form by Heathcote Statham; Franz Schubert's setting of Psalm 92:1–8; and *Enosh Kechotzir Yomov* (Psalm 103: 15–17) by Lewandowski. (The inclusion of *Mah Tov* and *Kol Nidrei* was particularly appropriate in that the eve of Yom Kippur was three days hence).

The formal liturgy concluded with Reverend Legarda giving the Aaronic Benediction in both Hebrew and English.

Fireside Chat

The choice of Dr Bannan as guest speaker was most fitting, as he has arguably been one of CCJWA's most notable contributors, namely, in his patronage, promotion, and fostering of Jewish and Christian choral music in a liturgical setting — to its great benefit. The collaboration with the Winthrop Singers arose serendipitously after Hon. Secretary Mary Marshall wrote to him in May 2012, asking about the possibility of the choir participating in the Commemoration of Kristallnacht in November that year. Dr Bannan responded that this would not be feasible, but instead, suggested entering into a joint venture with the Council, such as he had experienced with the UK branch of CCJ whilst involved with the choir of Desborough School, Maidenhead, and the Esterhazy Singers of London. The concept was agreed and developed, with an appropriate interfaith liturgy being created by a small committee of UWA and CCJ representatives (notably Dr Bannan and Kenneth Arkwright).

The first such evening worship took place in May 2013, and since then has been repeated each year, with CCJWA members and guests feasting on an array of choral works in a prayerful environment.

The success of The Winthrop Singers, who are drawn from various faculties, not necessarily music performance students, is a testament to Dr Bannan's dedication. His enthusiasm and generosity in assembling it, and imparting his skill, is reciprocated by the student's talent and responsive willingness. This wonderful mutuality is owed to Dr Bannan's vision on many levels.

Firstly, he pointed out that historically there has been an acknowledgement of Jewish music's influence on Christians (and vice versa) in constructive exchanges between particular Jewish and Christian musicians and composers. This positive relationship has been celebrated by public choral performances, in places such as Cambridge, and Canterbury Cathedral. Having experienced such, Dr Bannan sought to bring this harmonious tradition to Perth where he has resided since 2006. Promoting this kind of cooperation is not merely a worthy project, but fundamental to CCJWA's objectives.

Secondly, Dr Bannan holds the belief that the opportunity to sing should be afforded to all, not merely a small privileged elite. The skill, and emotional nourishment gained by participating in singing is often underrated. The success of music therapy is a witness to this. Further, some countries (such as Finland) view singing so vital to living, that it is mandatory that prospective teachers learn to sing.

In reply to Revd Marie Wilson's question as to where his journey began, Dr Bannan offered a vibrant sketch of his early years, including how his music-education interests developed. Born in Hanover, Germany, to English parents, he quickly developed vocabulary in both English and German. His fondness of speech already at two years of age would prove useful!

His linguistic and cultural affinity with Germany has served to be a bond with Kenneth Arkwright OAM (Honorary Life Member of CCJWA) who, as a Jew, experienced Germany firsthand. With his own love of music and knowledge of historical developments, Kenneth had much to share with Dr Bannan — a present example of Christian–Jewish interchange between their own musical traditions. Composers in the past had enjoyed similar friendships and shared their expertise and creative spirit in practical terms.

Indeed, Dr Bannan's fostering of this relationship, his devotion to making available music performance to young people, his historical participation in London in interfaith events featuring Jewish choral music, and his role with the Council in the St George's College evening worship, represent an implicit expression of interfaith dialogue — the creative dialogue of musical exchange assumes cultural preservation, education, admiration, respect and harmony.

Table Fellowship

The social interaction of the evening, traditionally an important component, occurred around soup and sandwiches (COVID aware), with choristers seated opposite CCJWA members and guests. This arrangement — varying from previous years — served as a good exchange. CCJWA is optimistic that this valuable contribution to interfaith enrichment will continue in the future, after Dr Bannan's retirement and subsequent return to the UK.

Judith Schneider
Vice-Chairperson, CCJWA
and
Mary Marshall
Honorary Secretary, CCJWA