

# Messiah: Saviour and Recruiting Sergeant

Bournemouth Symphony Chorus is celebrating a 100years of existence thanks to Handel's **Messiah**. The Choir has performed the work on upwards of 140 occasions. In most seasons, only this work attracted sufficient demand at the Box Office to turn loss into profit in the Choir's annual accounts. The annual performances, at Christmas, or early in the New Year, became a tradition and one that has been maintained until the present day. To those members who often asked for alternate fare for Christmas, the committee, egged on by its Hon. Treasurer answered, "Sorry, it's Handel, or bust."

## Comfort Ye, My Treasurers

*"The two performance concerts were **Elijah** and **Messiah** and it will be noted that 800 more people attended the two **Messiah** performances. This, I think, represents the relative popularity of the two works."*

**Stanley Arthur** (from his 1952 Annual Report as Honorary Secretary)

The very few breaks have been caused not through choice but through external factors: the outbreak of war, for instance, or the sudden closure of the Winter Gardens for urgent maintenance at the start of 1965.

Performing styles in Handel have changed remarkably over the last hundred years. Not until 1940, and then with many grumbles, was the ancient Vincent Novello edition of the vocal

score ditched by the Choir in favour of the "modern" edition by Ebenezer Prout, first published in 1902, nine years before the birth of the Choir!

To be fair, the next fifteen or so years saw conservative Bournemouth moving from the rearguard to the avant-garde in terms of Handelian practice. It started with Charles Groves who introduced period practices before they became commonplace. Well does the writer, then a member of St James Choir in Pokesdown, Bournemouth, remember the hot debates in quires and places where they sing over a rumour claiming that Charles Groves was going to scale down the orchestra, possibly reduce the Municipal Choir's numbers and was intending to play a HARPSICHORD to accompany the recitatives! What would have been the response had Charles Groves featured a counter-tenor, such as Yuri Mynenko who sang with the Symphony Chorus in the 21st century? Indeed, Messiah is nowadays almost invariably performed by the Chorus with a counter-tenor.

*"I feel choral societies should display a bust of Mr. Handel placed in a favoured position in the first row of tenors, in honour of their very existence: for how many amateur choral societies would have gone under but for the all-appealing masterpiece. Some of us must have heard it hundreds of times, and yet how fresh it is, and how we all love singing it."*

**Roy Henderson** (in a letter to his Choir)

*This is part of a letter from Charles Groves who couldn't attend the Choirs's AGM in June 1956 because of a conducting engagement in Newport.*

17.06.56

*Dear Mr Arthur,*

*Looking back upon last season's concerts reminds me that we can say that **Messiah** was the subject, as usual, of much head-scratching and mental conflict on the conductor's part. He is more than ever convinced that the "traditional" 19th century English performance does less than justice to Handel's genius. On the other hand a chamber performance is out of the question, assuming a choir of 200 voices. May we consider a true Handel-Mozart performance as was recently given on the B.B.C.? Mozart prepared his version for circumstances such as our own, that is to say where there is no organ available, Mr Chairman! Certainly, Mozart's late 18th Century style does no real violence to Handel's early 18th century classicism. The choral singing seemed extremely good to me on the 15th January, allowing for the two performances in a single day.*

*With Kindest Wishes  
Yours sincerely*

*Charles Groves*

The Choir was formed in an era of monumental Messiahs - the more the merrier was key to a successful performance. By 1900, the score had become part of Britain's heritage. Church choirs might essay one or two of its choruses, but to experience the "real thing" it was necessary to join a large Choral Society. There was safety in numbers. The **Christmas Messiah** was an ideal time to join such a body. Some choruses would be in the chorister's bloodstream and (s)he could learn the rest under cover of many experienced voices on her or his part. So many new singers across the country were recruited by the Messiah, and, provided the hurdle of the voice test was conquered, it offered a facile route into the thrill and camaraderie of a big choir.

**Isobel Baillie** sang the soprano solos with the Bournemouth Choir as soon as she returned from her vocal studies in Milan. Her autobiography was titled **Never Sing Louder Than Lovely** and through 45 years of visits to the South Coast, mainly but not entirely to sing in **Messiah**, she maintained an exquisitely pure tone without sacrificing clear enunciation making arias, such as **I Know That My Redeemer Liveth**, unforgettable to those who heard her.

**Kathleen Ferrier** reigned supreme in the contralto arias for six performances during the war years. Service people were admitted at half price; could they have taken sweeter or more consoling, memories to the



Pictured (clockwise from top left): Isobel Baillie, Norma Procter, Harold Williams, Parry Jones

front? Thereafter, **Norma Procter**, like Ferrier, a pupil of Roy Henderson became the first choice. Amongst the tenor soloists who sang the work with distinction with the Municipal Choir during its first 50 years were the Welshman, **Parry Jones**, and two distinguished Englishmen; Heddle Nash and Eric Greene.

In his youth, the writer was fed on the ringing, dark as gravy, tones of Harvey Alan in the bass solos. He was another pupil of Roy Henderson. However, the most frequent visitor to Bournemouth was the Australian, **Harold Williams**. He was admired for brilliant breath control and the clarity of his English diction - once he'd extinguished his Aussie accent! Harold was a cricket lover, both as a player in village matches and a spectator reputed never to have missed an England versus Australia Test Match.

**Messiah** was the choir's flexible friend. It may be the only choir to have sung the oratorio in a cinema (Bournemouth's Regent) under **Sir Malcolm Sargent** with timpani and cinema organ for accompaniment. All that in 1930. Bournemouth has heard many variations on Handel's original orchestration from grand Victorian confections to Mozart's version that Richard Stamp essayed in 1974.

After World War II, the work became the Choir's leading export. Invitations were received to sing in Wimborne Minster and Christchurch Priory. The Choir had been invited to sing the work in East Cliff Congregational Church during 1916 and had curtly declined as to do so was inconsistent with the "construction and procedure of the MUNICIPAL Choir". Post World War II, the mood had changed and this malleable work was taken and sung with soloists from the choir on several occasions. Here are two examples:

#### **Wimborne Minster February 1951**

Soloists from choir: **Ethel Fullerton** (soprano); **Muriel Pursey** (contralto), **Edgar Idle** (son of Frank as the tenor); **E I Jones** (baritone) Organist: **Norman Charlton-Burdon**

#### **Christchurch Priory February 1951**

Soloists from choir: **Ethel Fullerton** (soprano); **Muriel Pursey** (contralto), **Arthur Rayner** (tenor) & **E I Jones** (baritone) **Geoffrey Tristram** on organ (Hammond)



POST CARD

from **Howard Dalton**  
**First Bass**



In my early days in the Chorus and barely out of my teens I took part in my first Messiah. Next to me was a member holding a copy with the autograph of Kathleen Ferrier on the title page. That performance was in the late 1940s....

Another choir member had sung under Elgar as a boy! I was aware of our great musical heritage stretching back to the pioneering days of Sir Dan Godfrey...

## BOURNEMOUTH MUNICIPAL CHOIR

in conjunction with

**BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Season 1964 - 1965

**Sunday, 3rd January. MESSIAH.**

The choir committee very much regrets that, for the first time, the Annual performance of this work has had to be cancelled owing to the closure of the Winter Gardens for urgent reconstruction.

The Choir's first year of independence (1921-22) was anchored by the twin Messiahs at Christmas. This comes from the Chairman's Annual Report:

*The Messiah Concert [sic] was a great success financially and never before have the receipts reached such a high water mark, and I think it was generally admitted the best performance was given; this of course was due to the Choir being massed together.*

By massed, the Chairman meant in close order for the Choir had not returned to pre-World War I strength & balance (sopranos 70; contraltos 40; tenors 20; basses 35)

ADVICE (in a letter to the choir's AGM in 1943 from its conductor, **Roy Henderson**)

*There is one essential. In order to give itself freedom of expression the choir must free itself from its copies as far as possible. How about learning at any rate the Messiah choruses bit by bit so as to be ready? You will never regret it; it will stand you in good stead for many years.*

*The message remains as pertinent in 2012*

*Sir Charles Groves took what he had learned about performing Messiah with his Bournemouth Choir to choirs across the world, as this excerpt from a letter to the Choir's Secretary, Donald Sheppard demonstrates.*

21.xii.82

LONDON NW1 9UV

Dear Donald,

*... I conducted two performances of **Messiah** in the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, the first Englishman to do so in the 67 years of the Utah Oratorio Society. Now I have two more performances (one over already 19 December) with the LPO in the Albert Hall. Please give our united love to the BSC when you have the opportunity...*

*Charles Groves*



## BC: Before the Choir

Choral music started in Bournemouth with church choirs. At key moments in their church's year some of them formed festival choirs to sing larger works, such as Gounod's oratorio **Redemption**. All this amateur singing activity laid the ground for the formation of Bournemouth's first permanent giant group, **Madame Newling's Choir**, brought together to present a cantata by Dalhousie Young **The Blessed Damozel** based on the poem written by young Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the founder of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who later illustrated this poem with a famous picture. Madame Newling's Choir started with about 70 voices. Dalhousie Young (1866-1921), born in India, was a composer who had studied the piano under Theodor Leschetizky (famous as the teacher of Paderewski). Young wrote the cantata **The Blessed Damozel** for performance in Leeds and Frankfurt in Germany but it was the new Bournemouth Choir that was entrusted with the work's première accompanied by the Municipal Orchestra with the composer conducting. Interestingly, some 13 years earlier a young Claude Debussy had set the same poem in a French translation, **La Damoiselle Elue**. The Young première took place on Saturday 29th November 1902 at 3pm.

Therefore, it may be argued that **1902** is the foundation date for the Bournemouth Municipal Choir/Bournemouth Symphony Chorus for the latter choir grew naturally out of the former that

had, itself, been sired by Dan Godfrey from Madame Newling's group. The *Bournemouth Guardian* reported that the performance of **The Blessed Damozel** was "**capital**" and that the voices of the choir **"blended well"**. The audience **w e r e** appreciative and recalled the soloists: Emily Squire, Marion Dyke, and Herr **R o b e r t** Hensler, tenor, **"of Zurich"**. The cantata lasted under an hour



leaving plenty of time after the interval for individual items from the evening's soloists and part-songs from the choir with the choir's rehearsal pianist – Miss Craigie Moss – accompanying, where necessary.

The intrepid musical explorer, Madame Newling, did not rest on her laurels. Easter of 1903 saw her choir exploring the **Coronation Ode** that Edward Elgar had completed in 1902 for the Coronation of Edward VII. The work ended with **Land of Hope and Glory** with Elgar raiding his own **Pomp and Circumstance March no 1** for the tune he resplendently scored for Clara Butt's massive contralto voice, other soloists, chorus, orchestra and organ. Madame Newling was keen to squeeze the maximum advantage from weeks of rehearsal. It became her wont to run concerts twice, often on the same day (at 3pm and 8pm). On this occasion,

she organised an open rehearsal for the evening preceding two performances on Tuesday 28th April. The choir contained 100 voices and they were joined by Carrie Silvester (soprano), Harold Wilde (tenor) and Albert Garcia (bass) with May Peters in the stentorian "Clara Butt" role. Dan Godfrey kept the massed forces together during these performances. Unfortunately, Easter 1903 was full of miserable weather so the audiences were small. The second half of the programme contained assorted "**scenas**" for the soli and partsongs including **Vineta** (Brahms), **The Long Day Closes** (Sullivan) and **Song of the Vikings**.

The greatest builder of choirs and their audiences in Britain has been Handel's **Messiah**. New recruits flocked to rehearsals as soon as it became known that Madame Newling was scheduling it at Christmas, so that the Choir had doubled in strength by the performance on December 8th. The large choir ensured a better attendance. Once again, Dan Godfrey conducted the performances but Madame Newling drew the plaudits for her choral training: the end of the **Hallelujah** Chorus produced vociferous applause that was silenced only when Madame Newling rose from her seat and took a bow. Seats in the stalls were priced at 3 shillings and half a crown; with those in the balcony rather cheaper at 1/6 and for the fit, musical poor admission without a seat was a mere 1/-.

By its third season in 1904, the shape of the Newling Choir's year had settled down: Concerts in Spring and Autumn with annual "Christmas" twin Messiahs at 3pm and 8pm. Easter was celebrated through the choir's first **Elijah** with Maud Santley and Bantock Pierpoint amongst a strong solo quartet and November saw a Wagner Spectacular with a shrewd mixture of orchestral favourites: the **Tannhäuser** Overture and **Kaisermarsch**, choral numbers, including the Spinning Wheel Chorus



from *Tannhäuser* for which Madame Newling clearly had a soft spot. Bournemouthians were operamanes for the Winter Gardens was full of enthusiastic Wagnerites. The Bournemouth Guardian purred approval, noting that the choir had sung “*beautifully*”. This concert spawned an encore: the Grand Wagner Concert of November 1905 that attracted what the Bournemouth Guardian termed a “*crowded audience*”. Madame Newling had brought back to Bournemouth one of the stars of Covent Garden’s Opera House: Madame Albani, perhaps the first French-Canadian singer to achieve worldwide renown who was later to be honoured as Dame Emma Albani. Madame Albani received a “*flattering reception*” and Madame Newling a “*floral tribute*”.

Elgar’s *The Dream of Gerontius* was performed twice in 1909 & 1910, a magnificent achievement considering that the first London performance was delayed until 1903 and the piece had beaten one of the country’s finest amateur choirs at the work’s premiere in Birmingham in 1900. In today’s terms, it is the equivalent of an amateur chorus in a new town such as Stevenage staging a recent score composed by Sir Harrison Birtwistle. It had been Madame Newling’s Choir that first started a Bournemouth throat-tingling tradition of two choral concert performances on the same day. *The Musical Times* spoke well of the choir’s



performances of Arthur Sullivan’s *The Golden Legend* in 1907: “The choral portions were excellently sung by Madame Newling’s Choir of 200 voices, which, of course, received efficient support from the Municipal Orchestra with Mr Mark Quinton presiding at the organ.” That year also saw a performance of Frederic Cliffe’s 1905 *Ode to the North-East Wind*, based on words by Charles Kingsley, one of a handful of pieces by Cliffe that have survived in performable form into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Both of Cliffe’s symphonies had been aired in Bournemouth. Unfortunately, this Victorian composer (1857-1931), who taught at the Royal College of Music, became comfortably-off and lost his urge to compose, a condition exacerbated by

changes of musical taste after the first World War. However, distinguished critics, such as Lewis Foreman, who have heard some of his works rate them very highly and one or two works have been recorded in recent years.

Another tradition that passed from Mme. Newling’s Choir to The Municipal Choir was the annual Christmas performance(s) of *Messiah*. *The Musical Times* spotted the Achilles heel in such a tradition: when a work becomes hackneyed, artistic standards may drop. Certainly, the choir’s December 1910 performance, which the reviewer saw as a “*pecuniary success*”, drew adverse comments about the quality of the choral singing.

It “*lacked breadth and power*” and for the first hour was “*hesitant and finicking*”(sic!). Things cannot have been helped by Dan Godfrey who conducted despite being “*temporarily indisposed*”.

Having consolidated his working in creating the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra, Dan Godfrey was looking for other challenges as Director of Music for Bournemouth and Manager of the Winter Gardens. His political antennae were acute and he knew that Municipal purse strings loosened at the sight of anniversaries such as Bournemouth: the Centenary 1810 - 1910. The great success of the anniversary celebrations offered Godfrey a chance of further expanding his domain.





## Bournemouth Square en fête in 1910, the town's centenary year

This picture is a fascinating record. The **Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra** has just finished its morning rehearsal. Some of the players are pushing their bicycles across the Square which has been pedestrianised. The two in the centre foreground are trumpeters. Look at the horse and trap on the left. Do you see the “man in the white suit”? That’s Percy Grainger, doubtless coming away from the same practice. Edward Elgar and a host of other British composers attended the special centennial concerts. It’s a pity that Elgar couldn’t be present when **Madame Newling’s Choir**, conducted by Dan Godfrey and accompanied by the Municipal Orchestra, reached its apogee in their 1910 performance of ***The Dream of Gerontius***.

# The Birth of The Bournemouth Municipal Choir

## Tod und Verklärung

Madame Newling fell ill early in 1911. A concert to raise funds to help her was held in the Winter Gardens on 7<sup>th</sup> April. A large choir assembled and the high esteem in which she was held ensured that a substantial sum of money was raised from a packed Winter Gardens. Dan Godfrey was there to conduct a programme that included a Wagner chorus: *Hail! Bright Abode* from the opera Tannhäuser. Sadly, Madame Newling died at Easter 1911 on April 15<sup>th</sup> on the same day as Lady Hallé. Madame Newling's death was a personal tragedy for her family but also a devastating blow to the successful choir that she had formed, trained and to which she had given her name. With such a personal identification, there was a chance that her passing would destroy an important part of Bournemouth culture. Her choir's final event was a concert performance just ten days after Madame Newling's death of Edward German's Light Opera *Merrie England* with the composer himself conducting. As so often happens adversity brings people together, concentrating minds and attention. The Musical Times reported that Madame Newling's choir sang "with more intelligence and purity of tone than they had ever shown before."

The Musical Times carried this brief tribute:

*"Madame Newling, principal of a School of Music in Bournemouth and director of the choir that bore her name [died] on April 15<sup>th</sup>. For many years her position in musical circles in the town had been prominent, and the loss of her beneficent influence will be felt."*

## AD: After Dan Godfrey

Rescue acts were to become an all too regular part of Bournemouth's musical scene in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it was fortunate that Dan Godfrey was on hand to don armour and sword and to "fight the good fight". Dan Godfrey had been the regular performance conductor of Madame Newling's Choir so he knew of its strengths and he judged it to be the perfect vehicle to be *municipalized* and made part of the body, the corporation, of Bournemouth. Civic and community pride rose to grasp the opportunity to be the world's first town to boast a *Municipal Orchestra AND Choir*.

The Musical Times reported:

*"A Municipal Choral Society has been formed under the management of the Winter Gardens Committee, and it is proposed, by the cooperation of the new body and Mr Dan Godfrey's orchestra to give a two day festival in 1913. [ ... ] The prospective programme for the present season includes "Merrie England" (German), "Elijah" (Mendelssohn) and "Hiawatha" (Coleridge-Taylor).*

The Bournemouth Municipal Choir first took the stage not once but twice on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November 1911 in The Winter Gardens to sing in yet more performances of Edward German's comic opera *Merrie England*, written about 8 years earlier. That date is the "official" birthday of the Choir that still exists as the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus. It was a very official occasion. The town oozed municipal pride; the evening performance had been sponsored by the town's musical Mayor, Alderman H.S. McCalmont Hill,

and was "attended by the Mayor and Corporation in state"! Dan Godfrey invited the composer back to conduct these inaugural concerts. The Municipal Choir was launched in rude health on a loud unison F with the most appropriate text: *"SING...".*

In December the Musical Times reported:

*"... the choir rendering the cheery music with much vivacity and spirit."*

The same magazine reported the following concert in greater laudatory detail:

*"The Municipal Choir materially enhanced the reputation it acquired a few weeks ago by its capital rendering on December 12<sup>th</sup> of Mendelssohn's ever-green and ever-impressive masterpiece "Elijah". The 250 voices are fairly well balanced in point of numbers, but in actual performance the altos belie their numerical strength by their lack of power. The choir sang with breadth and vigour, and the careful training they had received was made apparent in many ways; the chief defect at present is the lack of knowledge respecting the various shades of tone colour."*

The Municipal Choir's first Chorus Master was Dr. H. Holloway, local composer and Organist of St. Stephen's Church, with Alice Harding as rehearsal accompanist and H. Arthur Kettle acting as Hon. Secretary. Singers were required to undergo voice trials and altogether over 200 assembled for the première performances. The initial repertoire was chosen on a fail-safe basis. The first two years A.D. mirrored the works of the last two B.C. and were packed with sure-fire box office successes. For a time there was talk of performing a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta but the expense of hiring so many soloists proved an inhibition and Dan Godfrey settled for a reprise of *The Golden Legend*.



## The First Picture of The Bournemouth Municipal Choir

*taken at 10.30pm on 12th December 1911 in the old Winter Gardens after two performances of Mendelssohn's Elijah*



*It was too soon for the Choir's name to be established: Bournemouth Municipal Choral Society (sic!) This picture catches a relaxed moment, so unusual for the time. Look at the Mayor leaning towards a young soloist and is she showing a trace of ankle?  
It's a Civic occasion with the Councillors fully robed, yet they are enjoying to the full their obvious pride in their own Municipal Choir.*

The ladies wore sashes right from the start. The sopranos, on the left of this image, wore them over their right shoulder and the contraltos were a mirror image. The men sport a higher percentage of dinner jackets than they achieved 20 years later. Does that suggest that the choir became less middle class and more representative of Bournemouth as a whole during that period? The soloists were boosted by members of the choir. I think it's the contralto soloist, Violet Elliott, on Dan Godfrey's right that has caught the eye of the orchestra's leader. Dan, himself, looks calm and composed. He came from a family of military musicians and had been taught the value of good preparation. The other professional soloists were Emily Breare, Ernest Pike (with hands on knees) and the Australian bass, Peter Dawson.

The first season was a busy one. After **Elijah** the choir moved to British music with a pairing of parts of Coleridge–Taylor's **Hiawatha** (conducted, naturally, by its composer) with **The Challenge**, a choral ballad by the Choir's own conductor Henry Holloway. *The Musical Times* reported of the last event, a concert performance of Gounod's opera **Faust**:

*"The music, of course, did not put the capabilities of the choir to any great test, but the singing was expressive and the work of the orchestra, exceptionally fine."*

Coleridge-Taylor fever gripped Edwardian choirs and the easy tunefulness of **Hiawatha** made them select the composer's later piece **A Tale of Old Japan** with great expectations. So, it was in Bournemouth: if 1912 had been the year of the North American Indians, 1913 started as the time for world music. "**Capital Performance, ... extremely efficient soloists**," yelled the *Musical Times*'s critic as he listened to a Japanese Cantata by an English composer of African descent, who, sadly, had died prematurely of pneumonia. The piece recaptures the freshness, melodic charm and rhythmic variety of Coleridge-Taylor's early **Hiawatha** trilogy. The story, a poem by Alfred Noyes, plots the love of Sawara, an art student, for O Kimi San, the ward of his teacher Yoichi Tenko. Sawara travels abroad to pursue his career whilst Kimi San's marriage to a rich merchant is arranged by Yoichi Tenko. Sawara returns famous but his love for Kimi San has cooled. Sawara's affection for him remains undimmed and she dies of a broken heart.

This sensitive, Eastern pastel was coupled with **The Wedding of Shon Maclean**, a Scottish piece set by a West Country composer that relates how twenty bagpipers drank and blew themselves to death at a wedding reception. (John) Hubert Bath, the composer, who had been born in Barnstaple, went on to fame as a writer of film music; he arranged and composed for the first British "talkie" **Blackmail** (1929). There was a time when his **Cornish Rhapsody** (from the film **Love Story**) was ubiquitous on wireless programmes such as *Friday Night is Music Night*.

Perhaps, it was singing Bath's revelry that inspired the members of the Municipal Choir to hold its first **Social and Dance**, though, no doubt, Bournemouth's reputation for health, salubrity and sobriety ensured that the tenor of the evening was not marred by bass instincts. Edward German was back by the seaside and once more at the helm of his **Merrie England** at Easter 1913. Further repeat performances followed.

Now that the choir has completed one hundred years of continuous existence, 21<sup>st</sup> century choristers may be surprised to learn that the work most often conducted by its composer over the last century has been German's comic opera.

Fortified by moral support from the town's corporation the Municipal Choir consolidated and grew. By 1914, the "Newling" tradition of the annual **Messiah** had been maintained and notable performances had been given of

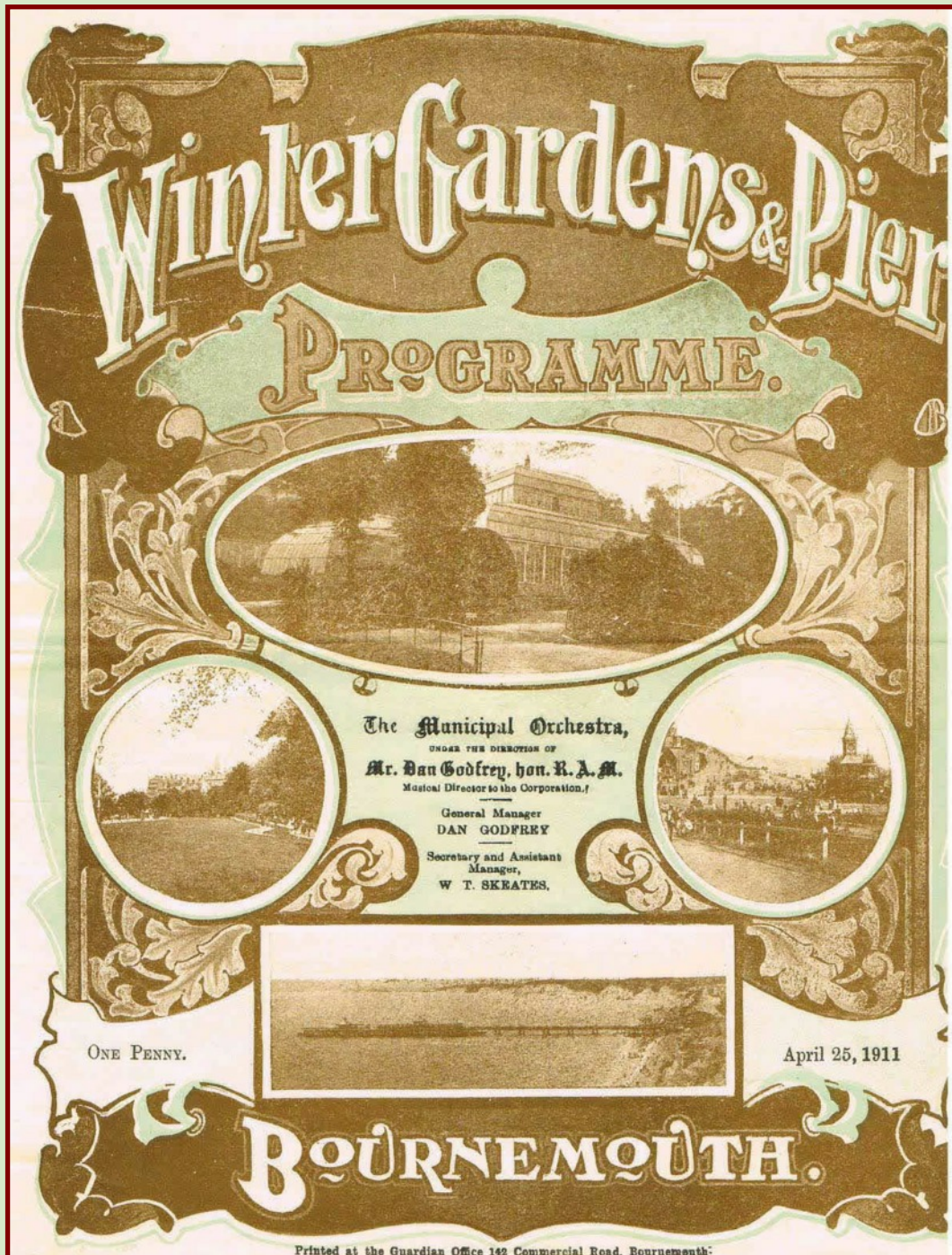
Hubert Parry's **Blest Pair of Sirens** and Mendelssohn's **Elijah** – both scores requiring double choirs. Parry's piece became almost the choir's signature tune. Parry's birth in Bournemouth, where his mother had fled in the forlorn hope of curing the tubercular condition that killed her within a fortnight of the composer's birth, ensured that his music became almost as "municipal" as the choir and orchestra.

In those days, concerts by the Bournemouth Municipal Choir had life before birth. It was the choir's habit in its early years to hold its last dress rehearsal in public and advertisements in the press ensured that those too impecunious to pay for a ticket and those serious musicians wishing to get to grips with novel scores knew that they were more than welcome to attend. So, effectively, **Tom Jones**, was on show on three occasions: Monday (public rehearsal), and Tuesday (3pm & 8pm, tickets 1s to 3s), each time with Edward German at the helm.

The choir joined the Orchestra to celebrate the Municipal Orchestra's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday at the start of the Winter Season in 1914 with a concert version of Berlioz's **Damnation of Faust** that drew plaudits in the local press: "one of the most successful choral concerts on local record".

Most years neither choir nor orchestra was costing the rate-payers of Bournemouth a penny thanks to the careful (and proud) stewardship of Dan Godfrey.





MADAME NEWLING'S CHOIR

THE FINAL CONCERTS  
after her Death

on Tuesday, 25th April 1911

included  
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## WINTER GARDENS

(Continued.)

Essex, when he discovers that Raleigh is not his rival, attempts to repair the mischief he has wrought by the following device:—

He arranges that one the foresters shall impersonate Herne the Hunter and appear in an apparition to the Queen while she is seated in the forest beneath Herne's Oak. According to tradition the appearance of the weird huntsman occurs only when the monarch contemplates a crime. The device succeeds, the Queen relents, and both the lovers and and Jill are pardoned.

### CHARACTERS

BESSIE THROCKMORTON ... Soprano  
(Maid of Honour to the Queen)  
Miss ELSIE SHORT.

JILL-ALL-ALONE (a supposed Witch) ... Contralto  
Miss HETTIE PROTHEROE.

QUEEN ELIZABETH ... Contralto  
Miss HETTIE PROTHEROE  
(Who, owing to the sudden illness of Miss Gwladys Roberts, has kindly undertaken the part at short notice.)

SIR WALTER RALEIGH ... Tenor  
Mr. JOHN ROBERTS.

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## WINTER GARDENS

(Continued)

THE EARL OF ESSEX ... Baritone  
Mr. DAVID BRAZELL.

THE MAY QUEEN ... Soprano  
Miss NORA READ.

A TAILOR ... Tenor  
Mr. J. T. WOOD.

A BAKER ... Tenor  
Mr. E. MOORE.

A TINKER ... Baritone  
Mr. C. A. BALCOMB.

A BUTCHER } ... Bass  
LONG TOM }  
Mr. T. B. NEWMAN.

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## The 1920s : Independence and Consolidation

The Choir remained an arm of local government until 1921 when it became self-governing. This was a defensive measure to ensure the choir's future. Money was short and the choir had enjoyed favourable terms, and the costs of promoting its concerts and paying for the Municipal Orchestra and its conductor Dan Godfrey had come from ticket receipts, supported, where necessary from money from ratepayers.

Councillors were not as supportive of music and the arts as they had been before the War and Dan didn't want the tightening of the town council's fiscal belt to jeopardise the choir that he'd nurtured.

Independence gave the Choir freedom to experiment. The **Christmas Messiahs** were declared great successes, financially and artistically. The Secretary, Arthur Cherrett, reported that "massing" the Choir together had given greater unity and togetherness. The second experiment he judged a failure. Coleridge Taylor's **A Tale of Old Japan** took place Bournemouth Town Hall during April 1922. "Never again" was the verdict on the Hall's acoustics, facilities and ability to attract a decent audience in Holy Week.

At the start of the 1922-23 season, the choir's 220 members were asked to rank which works they would like to feature in the season.



**IN MEMORY OF CHARLES HUBERT HASTINGS PARRY, BT C.V.O. D.C.L.Mus.Doc**

Born in this town 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1848

A great musician whose influence on British Music will always be remembered.

*This tablet is placed here by the Members of the  
Bournemouth Centre of the British Music Society 1923*

They advised:

1st concert **Sullivan** **The Golden Legend**  
2nd concert **Handel** **Messiah**  
3rd concert **Dvorak** **Stabat Mater**  
4th concert **Mendelssohn** **Elijah**

Choirs tend to be conservative and that selection looks Victorian. Maybe the audience agreed because the November performance of the Sullivan was poorly attended. The Choir's officers blamed a clash of dates with the unveiling of the town's War Memorial.

It was Dan, sorry, Sir Dan after he had been honoured for services to British music in 1922, who squashed the idea of Dvorak's *Stabat Mater*. *Elijah* with a strong quartet of soloists featured as the third concert whilst Sir Dan suggested a Bach and Parry Concert at Easter.

The Choir was conducted by a celebrity guest conductor for the first time: Sir Hugh Allen of the Bach Choir. The occasion was connected with the Bournemouth Centre of the British Music Society that was having a plaque erected to Sir Hubert Parry in the Winter Gardens. Graham Peel was for a number of years the local Centre Chairman of The British Music Society, a national body founded by the enthusiastic Dr Eaglefield Hull to promote British music and composers. One of their achievements on the South Coast was organising the fund-raising for a plaque honouring Sir Hubert Parry, born by chance in Bournemouth, Hubert's mother having been sent to Bournemouth in a vain attempt to regain her health. The plaque was unveiled on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1923 by Sir Hugh Allen, in the Winter Gardens, the town's ageing miniature Crystal Palace and Concert Hall. [It now resides in the town's Music Library.]

Sir Hubert Parry had assumed the Professorship of Music at the University of Oxford in 1900 when Peel was still a post-graduate music student. Whilst Parry's role at Oxford was not onerous (a few lectures per year) and didn't require him to be in residence it is likely that the two met during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Graham Peel held Parry in high esteem. No doubt it was Graham Peel who ensured that Sir Hugh Allen was present to do the unveiling honours in Bournemouth. Later in November of 1923 *The Times* critic commented



Sir Dan Godfrey pictured late in his career, apparently conducting from a piano score.

on what he termed a "revival" of Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust*:

*"The Bournemouth Choir gave an interesting performance. They are settling down after their re-organization into a competent body of 250 singers. They are not yet as responsive as they might be; their sopranos are sometimes phlegmatic, and the basses are neither so voluminous nor so profound as might be desired. The tenors, except for some difficulty with very high notes are unusually good, and by some miracle do not bleat but sing."*

A new Chorus Master, Hadley Watkins, was appointed to replace Thomas Crawford who had emigrated. Hadley Watkins had a fine, ringing Welsh tenor voice and he was wont to sing along with the Choir causing several comments that if he were to shut up, he might hear the choir more clearly and be able better to correct errors.

The last concert of the 1923-4 season at the end of the Easter Festival reinforced Bournemouth's pride as the birthplace of Parry with the town's first performance of his oratorio *Judith*. Artistically, the venture was a great success but the Box Office was disastrous, showing a net loss on the Concert. The season's finances, like many to follow, were saved only by the twin Messiahs at Christmas. But the Morning Post commented:

*"It was no empty compliment that the Choir paid to the memory of the great composer. The task was heavy with many passages well worthy of the choralists' skill. The Choir brought ... improved attack, more resonant tone, and generally showed a marked and gratifying advance on its previous efforts."*

Time for caution: *Messiah* and *Elijah* both appeared in the 1924-5 season to the surprise of many in the Choir who felt that they knew both so well that there would be nothing to do in rehearsals. Hadley Watkins quickly dispelled their concerns: his aim was note perfection which was so necessary in pieces that the audience, too, knew backwards. *Hiawatha* ended the season and included Roy Henderson, a future conductor of the Choir, appearing in fine fettle for the first time in Bournemouth.



## The Bournemouth Municipal Choir outside the Winter Gardens April 1923



This photograph was taken during the visit of Sir Hugh Allen in 1923. Excepting occasions when composers, such as Edward German, conducted their own works, without receiving a fee, this was the first time the Choir had been directed and assessed by a visiting conductor. Incidentally, the image reveals a problem of the Choir's own making. Its habit was to give two concerts in a day, but many in the choir were workers. Thus, the afternoon performance was graced, as was this picture, by a more elderly, sedate section. The standard of those performances were lower than the repeats in the evening but critics from London invariably filed early on the basis of the afternoon performance.

*photograph by Bailey, Glen Fern*





### **Key to people in this photograph:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Sir Dan Godfrey absent Godfather to the Bournemouth Municipal Choir | 6. Mrs Elizabeth Peel mother of Graham Peel         |
| 2. Sir Hugh Allen in trench coat and trenchant mood.                   | 7. Mrs Percy Dixon [née Katharine Graham Peel]      |
| 3. Sir Alexander Campbell Mackenzie composer                           | 8. Graham Peel composer & philanthropist            |
| 4. Miss Elsie Suddaby soprano soloist                                  | 9. Hadley Watkins future Chorus Master of The Choir |
| 5. Edwin Evans distinguished critic from <i>The Times</i>              | 10. Hamilton Law of the British Music Society       |

The tenor Archibald Winter must be another in the front row. Sopranos are to the left as you look at the picture and contraltos to the right.

*This record was probably commissioned and paid for by Graham Peel who lived in Bath Road with his mother, Elizabeth. He was a great enthusiast for the British Music Society and with Hamilton Law, energised and funded its Bournemouth section. All had gathered not only for the Concert but also to unveil the new plaque to Sir Hubert Parry. The evidence of their dresses suggests that Mrs Percy Dixon, later to become the President of the Choir, and her mother, both supporters of the British Music Society, joined in with the Choir in its two performances on that chilly April day.*



Bizet's **Carmen** show-cased Enid Cruickshank in the title role but the audience stayed at home. **King Olaf** demonstrated the Choir's increasing confidence in unaccompanied passages but the 1925-6 season was not a financial success and the Choir was fearful that its independence from the Municipality was at risk.

In the subsequent season, the committee responded to Sir Dan's advice that they should go for "star" names as soloists by selecting Horace Stevens as **Elijah** and Walter Widdop, Margaret Balfour and Roy Henderson for **The Dream of Gerontius**. Unfortunately, the stars failed to fill the Winter Gardens, particularly in the Elgar, and the Choir's committee continued to wrestle with maintaining the interest of singers yet not sacrificing the support of the public. The combination of **Acis & Galatea** with **The Mystic Trumpeter** (Harty) failed to turn the tide, but German's **Merrie England** in the presence of its composer, again proved to be a financial saviour. The Choir's 17th season should have started with a welcome return of Edward German to conduct his **Tom Jones**, but serious illness that blinded him in one eye had brought German's conducting career to a sudden close.

Graham Peel had become chairman of the Choir replacing Mr W.G. Cooper, who had been involved with choral music in Bournemouth for forty years and had led the

Choir's committee since 1913. Mr. Cooper remained as a 2nd bass. At Peel's instigation the first Bournemouth performance of Bach's **St John Passion** was successfully attempted. Herbert Eisdell was its distinguished, clear-toned Evangelist. John Andrew's "delightfully mellow" bass was so admired that the Choir's



committee invited him to sing in its next Concert - a concert performance of Wagner's **Tannhauser**. This pair of concerts sold heavily but the earlier, afternoon performance teetered on the brink of disaster. Its problem, shared by many afternoon concert through the 1920s was the absenteeism amongst the chorus, and in particular, its men. The Choir drew heavily on those who worked on a Saturday afternoon and who couldn't ask for time off three or four times a year.

It is possible that poor choir discipline and the failure of some members to be regulars at practices undermined the committee's faith in its voluble Chorus Master, Hadley Watkins. The workload needed in a schedule containing four pairs of concert was too much, especially when three of the works: **Tom Jones**, the **St John Passion** and **Tannhauser**

were new to many members. Basses, in particular, suffered a loss of morale and the 1928-29 season started with an unusually low number of them. Sir Dan, fortunately, had weighed in, declaring three pairs of concerts to be the ideal season for the Choir. In any case, the season had to be truncated because of the planned closure of the Choir's home: the Bournemouth Winter Gardens. The seasons's new work was Elgar's **The Music Makers**, twinned with Coleridge Taylor's **A Tale of Old Japan**. Sir Edward Elgar himself suggested Joan Elwes should take the soprano

solo in his work. The Christmas **Messiahs** were a great success with soloists suggested by Graham Peel. The Choir banked £227 from the pair of concerts.

The **St Matthew Passion** should have been the climax of the season, but its double choruses exceeded the choir's capacity to become confident in them, given the foreshortened rehearsal period. In its place Bach's **St John Passion** was repeated less than a year on from its first appearance in Bournemouth.



# The Choir During Two World Wars

War years are difficult for all choirs because so many members depart to serve in the forces. Uncertainty caused the Municipal Choir to suspend its programme in September 1939. The committee ruled that a minimum membership of 100 would warrant resumption. In fact, 150 turned out for the first rehearsal and a revised programme, starting with miscellaneous choral and orchestral pieces in November was scheduled. Eventually the SATB balance (68;59;29; 33) was declared to be "very good".



During the Second World War, members of the armed forces posted to the Bournemouth area revelled in the musical riches of their temporary home. The Secretary, Mr Stanley Arthur, noted that *"the Choir has been strengthened by the admission of voices in all parts and we have been pleased to welcome singers who have been evacuated to the town"*.

Bus services may have been restricted, but the tensions of war encouraged people to seek solace through music.

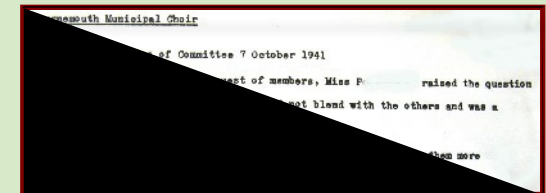


*Chorus Masters and members came and went during World War I but the beat of the "Musical Magician", Dan Godfrey, pictured here by Bournemouth artist Eustace Nash, went on.*

The Choir's Secretary reported at the end of the 1939 to 1940 season, *"No fewer than 6,543 persons attended our five concerts and it is to be noted that the Pavilion's share in the profits was £304."*

The programme had been a safe one (*Messiah* x 2, *Elijah* and *Creation*). This was necessary because Herbert Pierce, the Choir's new Conductor, was enthusiastic, but had succeeded Frank Idle *one of the finest choir trainers it has been our lot to work under*.

One of those whose musicianship was developed was Pte Arnold W. Jones who was posted to Bournemouth for six years. He joined the Municipal Choir and sang under Dr Reginald



Jacques and Roy Henderson. Arnold Jones developed a taste for singing and he went on to join a broadcasting choir, a male voice choir and a church choir. He ended up as the conductor of Wolverton's Light Orchestra and Gilbert and Sullivan Society.

Some Bournemouth women fell in love with G.I.s and Commonwealth fighting men. Barbara Sydee worked in the Bournemouth Music Library and was a first soprano in the Municipal Choir. She met an American soldier; they fell in love, and when they were married her wedding gown was fashioned from parachute silk. After the War, the couple settled in Minneapolis, USA where Barbara became a lifelong member of the local Gilbert and Sullivan Operatic Society.

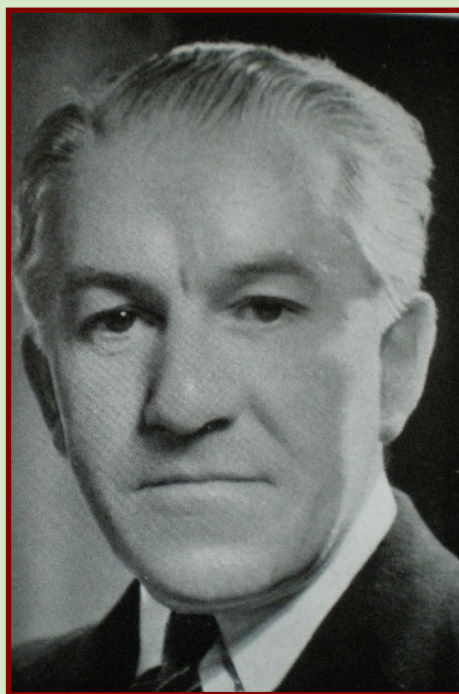
To sing Bach's **Mass in B minor** for the first time was an achievement for the war-torn Choir in 1941, even if, as reports suggest, the performance wasn't terrific. Perhaps for the first time, the accompanying orchestra was not the Municipal but the London Philharmonic. Fortunately, the great choir trainer, Dr Reginald Jacques, came by train to Bach's rescue. He performed the work twice on the same day in the Choir's next (31st) season, this time accompanied by the resurrected home orchestra. Donald Brook, the distinguished viola player, once wrote:

*If you ever meet a musician whose enthusiasm strikes you like a tornado, it will be Dr Reginald Jacques.*

Jacques was born in Leicestershire in 1894 and his prodigious talents were recognised when he was appointed organist and choirmaster to St Luke's, Sheffield at the age of fifteen. Seriously wounded in World War I he spent months in hospital in Oxford, time that he used to gain a degree. Soon, Reginald conducted orchestras and choirs across Oxford. Choirs loved him and by 1932 he had been appointed to the conductorship of the London Bach Choir. Dr Jacques became famous for his Bach interpretations. At the outbreak of World War II, Dr Jacques organised children's concerts, but the authorities withdrew their support, fearing the outcry that would have occurred if a bomb fell onto a theatre packed with children.

Reginald moved to C.E.M.A. (Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts). Being a good organiser, he quickly became its musical chairman. That organisation later transformed into the Arts Council of Great Britain. Meanwhile,

back in Bournemouth, Reginald Jacques was appointed Conductor of its Municipal Choir after an appallingly unsuccessful interregnum under Reginald Goodall. Goodall's concern for complete accuracy and his off-putting manner upset the Choir, but not as much as his tendency to conduct rehearsals **SITTING DOWN!** Jacques' bubbling enthusiasm and technical expertise acted as soothing balm for the Choir. But Reginald was doing too much and he hated



*Dr. Reginald Jacques  
Conductor 1941-2*

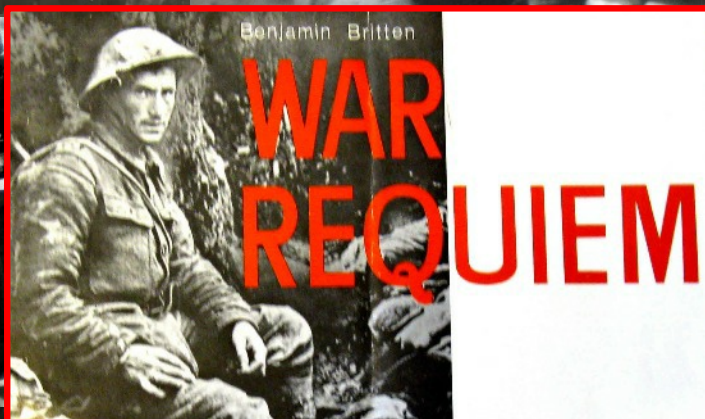
travelling under wartime restrictions. Brahms **German Requiem** framed World War II for the Choir. When Richard Austin conducted it in March 1939, few anticipated war with Germany. However, when Roy Henderson revived the work in November 1945, memories of the conflict were fresh and raw. It is interesting to see that the Choir took precautions and advertised the work as Brahms **Requiem**.

The Choir responded differently during the aftermaths of the two wars. Britain after World War I found it difficult to deal with the appalling scale of its losses. The Twenties were characterised by a brittle gaiety. The Choir caught the mood by reviving Edward German's **Merrie England** and then moving to his **Tom Jones**. Perhaps there was a nod towards harsh times when Hamilton Harty's **The Mystic Trumpeter** was sung in 1920, but its effect may have been negated by being programmed with **Hiawatha's Wedding Feast**.

Roy Henderson, deeply moved by World War II, reflected this in his notes to the Choir. In the years that followed he conducted Arthur Bliss's **Morning Heroes**. It's an *in memoriam* piece for those soldiers, including Arthur's brother, Kennard, killed in the World War I. One of the poems that Bliss used includes a reference to "*the driver deserting his wagon in the street, the salesman leaving his store, the boss, the book-keeper, porter, all leaving.*" (Walt Whitman "Drum Taps") Amongst such workers were members of the Municipal Choir. Henderson performed Ralph Vaughan Williams' cantata **Dona Nobis Pacem** in 1948. Choir and audience would have been as one in hoping that peace was there to stay.



## Geoffrey Hughes preparing Britten in 1979





## Bournemouth Symphony Youth Chorus (BSYC)



The BSC was invited by the Dorset Youth Orchestra to take part in a performance of Mahler's **Resurrection Symphony** in the Winter Gardens, Bournemouth, which was followed by a collaboration on **Grande Messe Des Morts** by Berlioz Requiem. After this there was correspondence between Carolyn and Richard Ely (then Dorset's Director of Education) that a Youth Choir should be set up which would be supported by the BSC who would run awareness raising workshops for young people in and around Bournemouth and Poole. Richard persuaded Pat Hymers, Chair of the Education Committee, to take the idea

forward and the BSO agreed to provide programming opportunities for the Youth Choir. The first partnership meeting took place at Poole Arts Centre attended by Andrew Burn for the BSO, Carolyn Date for the BSC, plus Pat Hymers & Richard Ely for Dorset County Council, David Norton for the Dorset Music Service, with Steve Gregson representing schools. The BSC set up vocal workshops for children in the conurbation led by Neville Creed supported by Liz Nayler, BSC Education Liaison Officer. Children were subsequently auditioned by Liz Nayler, who was invited by DMS to become the Founder Director, and Malcolm Burdett was

appointed as accompanist. Thus, the Dorset Youth Choir (DYC) was formed in 1997 with a Training Choir for younger children. The BSC stipulated that the Children's Choir must be trained to read music, and be comfortable when led by different conductors. The DYC was a success from the start, and has since taken part in many high profile events with the BSC, the BSO and other bodies. Its workshops continue led by well known musicians, including Gareth Malone and Paul Rissman.

The BSC took over formal management of the choir in 2004 when the name changed to Bournemouth Symphony Youth Chorus and the BSC became responsible for the future viability of the youth choir. The BSYC is supported financially by over 80 members of the BSC who are Patrons for the youth choir as well as providing practical support for rehearsals and concerts. Sue Gosling, also a BSC member, is Secretary; and she is supported by De Ashton, Margaret Burdett and other members of the BSC who act as chaperones and other necessary roles.

The BSC actively generates opportunities for the Youth Chorus, and has included them in their Commissions. The BSYC has had four Directors, Elizabeth Nayler, (interim directors Andrew Knights and Steve Gregson) Cathy Lamb, Fiona Clarke with Elizabeth Nayler returning to her old post in 2009. Elizabeth Nayler's work has been at the heart of the BSYC's progress. After her retirement in 2012 she was succeeded by the very highly regarded conductor Jean Holt. Malcolm Burdett remained their inspiring accompanist throughout this period until his untimely death in 2009, after which his daughter, Katherine Wills, has been appointed to this role.



## Four graduates of the BSYC tell their stories ...

Having left behind church singing as a boy chorister I found the BSYC to be a fantastic opportunity to carry on with my singing. The experiences I had with the choir encouraged me to audition for the adult chorus, especially after having collaborated with them as part of the recording of Carmina Burana in 2006. After I left the BSYC I went on to sing with the National Youth Choir and took part in the Eton Choral Courses. I have recently graduated from Cambridge University reading music where I held a choral scholarship and sang in various guises from musical theatre to close harmony groups and even a boy band! Singing with the BSYC gave me the confidence to pursue singing seriously and moving to the BSC gave me an enviable, professional choral training not to mention many unforgettable experiences.

**James Partridge** *first bass*

I joined the BSYC or Dorset Youth Choir as we were known then in 1997 when I was 11 years old. There were about 40 of us in the original training choir. Liz Nayler was the boss and Malcolm Burdett played piano for us. At first we rehearsed in Hamworthy, Poole before moving to Ferndown Middle School on Monday evenings. One of the first concerts I remember was at the Poole Arts Centre when we sang 'Snowman' at Christmas. The best memories were when we sang Carmina Burana at the Royal Albert Hall in London, April 2000, what an amazing place! A brilliant time was when we went on tour to France and had an great time at Disneyland singing to fellow tourists, I still remember the words. I feel privileged to be one of the original members of the BSYC and to still be singing with the BSC is great.

**Stephen Ballantine** *first tenor*

Mum and Dad are members of the BSC so as a child I sat in on rehearsals and went to concerts when they did tours abroad. When the Youth Chorus was founded I was eager to audition and brimmed with pride as I told my parents that I was to be a member of the new choir. Monday rehearsals proved to be exciting and challenging but above all enormous fun. The music was beautiful and performances gave me a great sense of achievement; it was satisfying to find that everything came together and all our efforts paid off. Later on I discovered just how therapeutic singing could be; however stressful my schoolwork or exams were there was nothing that a good dose of singing couldn't cure. (I still hold this view now although homework has been replaced with housework, and maths tests with getting my two small boys ready to leave for school in the morning!)

We were able to sing in some fantastic venues of which the Royal Albert Hall sticks in my mind for its gargantuan proportions. Singing alongside the adult chorus with the symphony orchestra made a great impression on me and I remember drinking in all the instruction and advice I could from the celebrated conductors with whom we were working. I loved listening to the breath-taking soloists and any orchestral pieces that were on programme. The choir have the best seats in the house! It was at choir that I first met Maurice. As rehearsals went by we got to know each other better and became good friends. Love blossomed and we became an item - we are now married! We moved away but have since returned and so I have been able to join the BSC. I had missed singing in a choir. The Chorus is demanding at times but I relish the challenge. I am discovering so much music. Being part of the huge sound created by so many voices is a great feeling and I am not ashamed to admit that I find performing again exhilarating.

**Emily Walters** *second soprano*

I've been connected to the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus for several years starting with the Youth Chorus when I was fourteen. I've enjoyed so many exciting opportunities with both choirs but two in particular come to mind. One was my first performance of Carmina Burana - I had never sung in anything so loud! The second was when I had to dress up as a 'tart' to play the part of a Gossip in Britten's Noye's Fludde, not my usual concert dress!

I was lucky to have so many opportunities to sing with professional orchestras and soloists from a young age. It was experiences like these that inspired me to go on to pursue a career in singing. I am coming to the end of singing in **Genesis Sixteen** this year, a training choir led by Harry Christophers and the Sixteen, and I'm looking forward to what the future will bring.

**Hannah Ely** *first soprano*

## **Floreat BSYC, Floreat BSC!**

The BSYC performances during the BSC's Centenary Season have been stunning, and include **Not in Our Time** concerts and recording, the David Fanshawe memorial concert, **Carmina Burana** in Bristol and Poole, and **Chalk Legend** in Weymouth as part of the 2012 Cultural Olympiad. During that season, the BSC had 14 singers who were graduates from the BSYC. In addition, other former members have sung with the Chorus for a while before moving away to attend Universities. All are excellent singers, and a testament to the value of this work. At least eight other members of BSC have come from other youth choirs in the area. Youth Choirs represent the future well-being of the BSC, and are an important musical and social investment.

**Carolyn Date** *Chorus Manager BSC*

## Royal Occasions



GLADYS RIPLEY

A CELEBRATION CONCERT in honour of the CORONATION  
of HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Sunday Evening, 31st May, 1953, at 8.0

# BOURNEMOUTH MUNICIPAL ORCHESTRA

LEADER: HUGH MAGUIRE

with

## BOURNEMOUTH MUNICIPAL CHOIR

CHORUS MASTER: CYRIL KNIGHT

and

**GLADYS RIPLEY, Contralto**

**Conductor: CHARLES GROVES**



CHARLES GROVES

- |    |   |    |    |                      |    |                       |
|----|---|----|----|----------------------|----|-----------------------|
| 1. | FANFARE FOR ORCHESTRA                     | .. | .. | ..                   | .. | <i>Percy Whitlock</i> |
| 2. | CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA: God Save the Queen   | .. | .. | ..                   | .. | <i>arr. Elgar</i>     |
| 3. | OVERTURE, Agincourt                       | .. | .. | ..                   | .. | <i>Walter Leigh</i>   |
| 4. | SEA PICTURES, for Contralto and Orchestra | .. | .. | ..                   | .. | <i>Elgar</i>          |
|    | (1) Sea Slumber Song                      |    |    | (2) In Haven         |    |                       |
|    | (3) Sabbath Morning at Sea                |    |    | (4) Where Corals Lie |    |                       |
|    | (5) The Swimmer                           |    |    |                      |    |                       |

**Soloist: Gladys Ripley**

5. MARCH, Pomp and Circumstance No. 1, in D .. .. *Elgar*  
Soloist: Gladys Ripley

INTERVAL

- |     |  |                          |
|-----|--|--------------------------|
| 6.  | CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA: Fairest Isle, from "King Arthur" ..                     | Purcell,                 |
|     |  | arr. David W. B. Johnson |
| 7.  | CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA: Coronation Anthem, "Zadok the Priest" ..                | Handel                   |
| 8.  | CHOIR—Unaccompanied: Motet, "O Lord, make Thy Servant,<br>Elizabeth" .. .. . | William Byrd             |
| 9.  | MUSIC FOR THE ROYAL FIREWORKS .. .. .  | Handel                   |
| 10. | CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA: England .. .. .   | Parry                    |
| 11. | (a) O Peaceful England, from "Merrie England" ..                             | Edward German            |
|     | (b) Dream o'day Jill, from "Tom Jones" ..                                    | Edward German            |
|     | (c) Song of the Smuggler's Lass ..   | Montague Phillips        |

## Gladys Ripley

12. CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA: Rule, Britannia *Arne, arr. Sir Malcolm Sargent*

Accompanist: CECIL WHITE



Arthur Bliss visited Bournemouth fairly regularly as composer/conductor. In 1922 he appeared as enfant terrible to perform **Rout** and his **Colour Symphony**. A local critic accused Bliss of a further vice: "cleverness". The noisy, cocky brat no doubt gave some of the ladies in the Winter Gardens a touch of the vapours, and the accustomed soothing aroma from the pines would have made astringent by the opening of "smelling salts".

By the 1950s Bliss, always a charming, correct, chivalrous man with a no-nonsense military bearing, had mellowed. A knighthood recognised his musical gifts, and he succeeded Sir Arnold Bax as **Master of the Queen's Music** in 1953. Arthur was a backwards-looking figure, a lover of heritage (he put back a *k* into the *Queen's Musick*) who personified the British musical scene. What better person to help the Western Orchestral Society in 1954 in its bid to rescue the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, from the ashes of the doomed Municipal Orchestra? Bliss became President of the Society, and he brought, if not "by appointment to the Queen", continuity guaranteed by the establishment.

Thus, when Groves and the Orchestra were invited to perform at the 1959 Royal Concert it was appropriate to include a piece by Bliss. Groves chose his **Pastoral: Lie Strewn the White Flocks** (1928), one of the first pieces that showed Bliss moving from the English avant-garde towards a more restrained, classical style. The work, which is dedicated to Elgar, uses a medley of Greek texts and calls for flute, soprano, strings and a mixed chorus. It allowed the Municipal Choir to sing for royalty for the first time.



# ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL

(General Manager - T. E. Bean, C.B.E.)

## ST. CECILIA'S FESTIVAL

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

# ROYAL CONCERT

in the presence of

**HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH THE QUEEN MOTHER**

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24th at 8 p.m.**

(DOORS open 7.15 p.m.)

(Patrons are requested to be seated by 7.45 p.m.)

IN AID OF

MUSICIANS' BENEVOLENT FUND AND ALLIED CHARITIES

## **BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Leader: Roland Stanbridge

Conductor:

**CHARLES GROVES**

## **BOURNEMOUTH MUNICIPAL CHOIR**

Chorus-Master: Cyril Knight

## **TRUMPETERS OF THE ROYAL MILITARY SCHOOL OF MUSIC**

Conductor: LT.-COL. D. McBAIN

**DAME MYRA HESS** — PIANOFORTE

**PAMELA BOWDEN** — CONTRALTO

Overture, Cockaigne, Elgar : Pianoforte Concerto No. 4 in G, Beethoven : Pastoral, Bliss : Slavonic Rhapsody, No. 3, in A Flat, Dvorak.

Tickets : 7/6 to 3 guineas from the Box Office, Royal Festival Hall and usual agents, on sale October 24th.  
Free list entirely suspended.



# Naming the MV Queen Elizabeth



Above (left): Assistant Chorus Master and Accompanist, **Christopher Dowie** gives last minute instructions to the crew of her majesty's choir a.k.a. the **Bournemouth Symphony Chorus**, some of whom are seen to the right and below.

The date is the 11th October, 2010 and the place is the Ocean Cruise Terminal in Southampton Docks. The BSO, Chorus and BSYC Chamber Choir, conductor Anthony Inglis, soloist Lesley Garrett, bands and musicians have assembled to entertain the Queen and the guests at the official naming ceremony for the new Cunard Cruise Liner **M.V. Queen Elizabeth**.

A notelet from **Alastair Smith** (**Chairman of the Chorus in 2010**)

*And ... more recently the Royal trip when the Queen came to Southampton to name the Queen Elizabeth. Security was tight - you needed your distemper certificate ... the insight into how stage-managed it was. To be part of that and to sing **Amazing Grace**, **Jerusalem**, etc. in arrangements that didn't slap on the emotions with a trowel but with a bloody, big shovel. For me, being Scottish, I noticed a couple of piper - one a wee lassie. That was the only time I've sung accompanied by bagpipes. The pipes introduced **Amazing Grace** and then there was Lesley Garrett, giving her all. It was "pomp and stomp" stuff, but it was great, being part of history, singing to Terry Waite, and a great diversity of people.*





## Bournemouth's Unfinished Symphony

Close your eyes and think of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and what do you hear in your mind's ear? Probably the *Ode to Joy*. But let's enter H.G. Wells' Time Machine and travel back to Bournemouth in 1925 and Dan Godfrey, the year before Felix Weingartner's epoch-making first electrical recording with the London Symphony Orchestra. Let's pose the same question. The answers from music lovers then would be very varied. Some would remember the hesitant string figure that starts the work, others the striking fusillade in the *Scherzo* and most of the rest would opt for a moment of stillness from the slow movement. Few might conjure up the finale's memorable tune despite the symphony having received many performances in the Old Winter Gardens, such was Dan's delight in complete symphonic cycles. Why did the public not register the *Choral Symphony's* crowning glory?

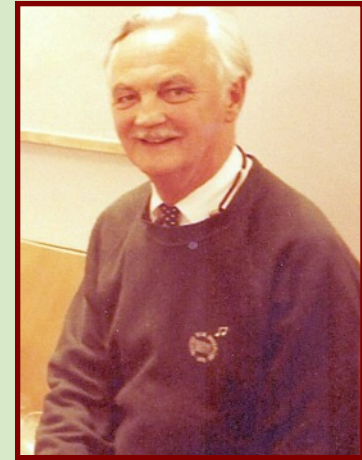


Well, when Godfrey advertised *Beethoven's 9th* in a programme, the small print would mention that only the first three movements would be played. Godfrey, Austin, and all the BMO conductors before Rudolf Schwarz, *NEVER* conducted the Choral finale of the Choral Symphony in Bournemouth.

By extension, the Bournemouth Municipal Choir didn't sing the work until the Choir was 40 years old. Even then, it couldn't claim the peak for itself, having joined choral societies such as Salisbury's in staging a performance suitable for the *Festival of Britain*. That first complete performance included Elizabeth Schwarzkopf as a soloist and she sat amongst the choir's sopranos. I wonder who had the honour of sitting beside her!

There is little doubt that Bournemouth and its orchestra holds the world record for the greatest number of non-choral performances of the *Choral Symphony*. It's a title, if not an honour, which it's unlikely ever to lose because although such practice was not uncommon then, it would be unthinkable to do this today. What other factors caused the choir and its conductors to delay their assault on one of the highest peaks in the Alpine range of choral masterpieces?

Of course, size matters in such things. With the best will in the world, *Harry Christophers* and *The Sixteen* couldn't attempt a *Choral Symphony* without mikes, speakers and gizmos. Beethoven needed something big. The Bournemouth Municipal Choir always had the numbers of voices; it started with over 200 and when it moved to the "new" Winter Gardens after World War II, the broad stage could accommodate two such choirs, if necessary. Yet, lack of tenors was a hardy perennial. Wessex isn't



David Lewis was a Choir stalwart for 40 years from 1954. A proud Welshman, his bass voiced was heard in 16 performances of the Choral Symphony.

Wales; tenors don't grow on pine trees. In his native South Wales, Hadley Watkins, the BMC Chorus Master in the 1920s, could pipe down a shaft, "Tenners", and a cage of black-faced miners would be sent up, eager to cast away their pit props in favour of Hadley's favourite tonic sol-fa score props. So keen to support the tenor line was Hadley, a mellifluous tenor himself, that he sang along in rehearsal and performance, causing at least one member to complain that if Mr Watkins sang a little less, he would hear the flaws and virtues of the choir a little more.

Whose programme is it anyway? At its inception, the Municipal Choir was an instrument of local government, subservient to the will of the orchestra's conductor, Dan Godfrey. He was a pragmatist: if it worked as written, he'd programme it; if not, he would adapt it by truncation, selection, or rescoring.

Truncation was his recipe for the **9th** partly because he knew of “*the issue*”. Say it not in Gath but for the first half of its existence, the choir’s soprano line was more stout than svelte, its average age mature and matronly, and its status refined and genteel. Ladies don’t push; without push and much support, Beethoven’s blazing top line, which highlights top As sprinkled with Bs for extra glitter, sounds pallid: more joyless than joyful.

The work demands *toned* bodies, allied to a *go for it* attitude. Many a modern conductor must rejoice that the Singing, Swinging Sixties, Women’s Lib and the Gym culture have made women fit, free to sing without frisson of fear the great rising phrase that ends with a fortissimo high A held for eight bars:

**“Seid umschlungen, Millionen!  
Diese Kuss der ganzen Welt.”**

**“Be embraced, millions!  
This kiss for the whole world.”**

Conductors are as terrified of not doing justice to Beethoven’s most demanding symphony as are choirs. Rudolph Schwarz wanted to programme the piece from his earliest days in Bournemouth, but Roy Henderson assessed that his choir was unready for the challenge.

Some notable recordings in the 1960s faked the choirs by filling the seats entirely, or almost entirely, with professional singers but still claiming that the record featured this or that amateur choral society or chorus.

In 1970, one conductor brought along some professionals to help the Bournemouth choir without getting either its, or its chorus master’s, permission to do so. Nothing antagonises choirs

more. It’s as if their collars have been felt, judged too limp and been reinforced by the addition of visible collar stiffeners. As for the chorus master, he demanded an apology or else he threatened to refuse to work again with Maestro XXXX!

Graham Parkin puts his finger on why the Choral Symphony appears far more frequently during recent decades; it’s a long sit followed by a draining sing. Beethoven coined it a “*Symphony with Final Chorus of Schiller’s ‘Ode to Joy’ for full orchestra, 4 soli and 4 chorus parts*”.

### POSTCARD

from **Graham Parkin**  
**first tenor**



*Apart from our concerts in Bristol, Exeter, Portsmouth and Southampton, we performed in Bath, Cardiff, Swansea, Basingstoke, Warwick, Manchester and London. The concert in the new Bridgewater Hall in Manchester with the late Yakov Kreitzberg was a memorable performance of Mahler’s “Resurrection” Symphony. My impression of this great work and the Beethoven “Choral”, when we literally sing our hearts out after sitting for the rest of the performance, is the feeling of exhilaration but total exhaustion at the end!*

Choral societies are more likely to vote for a traditional evening-long oratorio replete with choruses for a term of busy rehearsals or works requiring fewer expensive soloists. Symphonies with choral finales suit the immediate needs of orchestras better than choirs. After the Municipal Choir became the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus, the orchestra’s management had a greater say in determining joint programmes.

Works like Beethoven’s **Choral** and Mahler’s **Resurrection Symphony** have enjoyed a great increase in performance frequency by the Chorus in the last decades. They have become repertoire pieces and the choir has been able to diversify, to devote practice time to extra concerts, sometimes unaccompanied, or with organ or small ensemble accompaniments.

*A final thought: if an orchestra can play an un-choral choral symphony, then a choir can finish an unfinished symphony. In Constantin Silvestri’s time, the Municipal Choir “completed” Bruckner’s unfinished **9th Symphony** with his **Te Deum**. (That concert in the 1968 Easter Festival included some of the BSO’s finest playing under Silvestri, according to one informed commentator). Stylistically, the two works shout at each other, so arbiters of taste have criticised such programming. Scheduling these two Bruckner works in the same concert was as odd as playing Beethoven’s **9th** sans finale.*

### POST CARD

from **Jean Harvey**  
**vice president**



*Beethoven’s 9th Symphony is huge sing, even for a choir of 150. One performance that stays in my memory was with the BSO and Richard Hickox in Plymouth Pavilions about 15 years ago. A midweek event, its early coach departure and an epidemic conspired to reduce our numbers to 67. Neville sang to boost the basses and Hickox gave lots of encouragement to give our all. When we got to the bass entry, I could feel the platform shaking with the effort they made. Somehow we did it. Richard Hickox had a look of amazement at the volume we produced. It just goes to show what you can get out of terrified people!*



## Choir Celebrations

### Silver Jubilee in 1936-37

This anniversary was not formally celebrated but its programme had special character. The earlier concert was a concert performance of Saint-Saens **Samson and Delilah**, the third grand opera that the choir had performed (Wagner's **Tannhäuser** and Bizet's **Carmen** having preceded it).

The Easter Concert was a second attempt under Frank Idle to do justice to Verdi's **Requiem Mass**. Sadly, Noel Eadie, the soprano soloist, was taken ill and had to be substituted at the last minute. One wonders whether the task of singing the demanding part twice in the same day overwhelmed her.

Curiously, the Choir held its own, informal celebration, in advance, as this notice placed in the Annual Report for the 24th Season (1934-35) shows:

**PLEASE NOTE:**

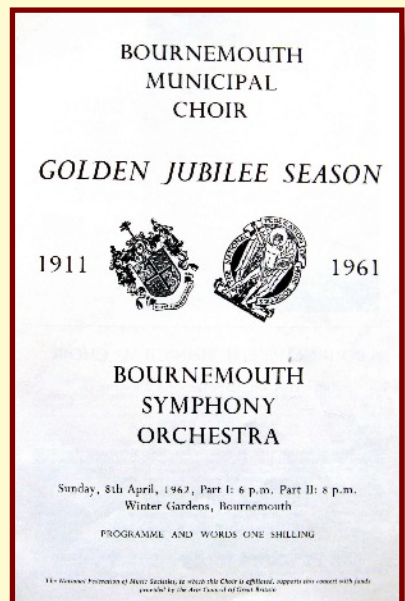
*The rehearsal for the Silver Jubilee Celebration  
will be held in the  
Richmond Congregational Church Lecture Theatre  
on Tuesday, April 30th at 7.30p.m. [1935!]*

*Please bring your copies of the  
Hallelujah Chorus and Jerusalem.*

### Golden Jubilee in 1961-62

The choir's Golden Jubilee was celebrated by a reception given by the Mayor, Councillor Deric Scott. **Blanche Fraser** and **Stanley Arthur** both attended. Both had sung in the Choir's first concert. Stanley Arthur remained as a tenor. Fittingly, he sang solo in part of German's **Merrie England** and was joined in other excerpts by leading members including **David Mills**, **Ethel Fullerton**, **Donald Sheppard**, **Joan Price**, **Victor Thomas** and **Anne Dunn**. Deric Scott revealed that he had been a member for five seasons before World War II when Frank Idle had been the conductor. The chairman, Mr Travis, responded and stated that he could skip the audition and re-join, if he wished!

The anniversary season had started with a performance of Verdi's opera **Nabucco** and ended with a performance of Bach's **St Matthew Passion** at Easter 1962, the first time that a full version of Bach's masterpiece lasting over four hours had been heard in Bournemouth. Charles Groves, with his usual care for style, employed Millicent Silver on harpsichord and Cyril Knight on organ. The Choir sang well and its men were "**notably solid in tone**" according to the Bournemouth Echo's music critic.



## Diamond Jubilee in 1970-71

The Season, *technically the Municipal Choir's 59th*, commenced with Verdi's **Requiem Mass** under Bernard Keefe, the fifth conductor to work on the piece with the Municipal Choir. Although the Choir must have seen this as a special event, Verdi's **Requiem** had yet to become the crowd-pleaser that it did in later decades and the Winter Gardens was less than two thirds full.

After a successful **Messiah** sung to an almost full house in mid-January under Brian Priestman, where as well as conducting he also played the harpichord continuo, the season came to a rousing conclusion with a Diamond Jubilee concert that included two stirring Baroque pieces: **Zadok the Priest**, and Bach's early cantata **God's Time is the Best**, BWV 106, separated by a peaceful pastoral: Arthur Bliss' **Lie Strewn the White Flocks**.

After the interval the pagan splendours of Walton's **Belshazzar's Feast** were unveiled under Meredith Davies. When Colin Wheatley, the baritone soloist, translated the words on the the King's wall: **Thou Art Weighed in the Balance and Found Wanting** he was supported by 174 in the Choir. Did he think for a moment that his words described the audience: a paltry 815 in a hall built to house twice as many?

**Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin**

## 75 years in 1986 - 87

The centrepiece of the celebration was a performance of Sir Edward Elgar's **The Apostles** in November 1986. Sir Charles Groves, a great proponent of Elgar's oratorios was its conductor and there was a strong cast of soloists; **The Apostles** tends to be an "occasional work" because it requires 5 soloists. It was forty years since Roy Henderson had introduced the choir to the work. On hearing that the work was being repeated, Roy wrote that the part of Jesus in **The Apostles** was his favourite Elgar role.

Appropriately, the performance was the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's annual St Cecilia Concert, an event that raises money for the orchestra's Benevolent Fund, partly through the musicians giving their services for free.

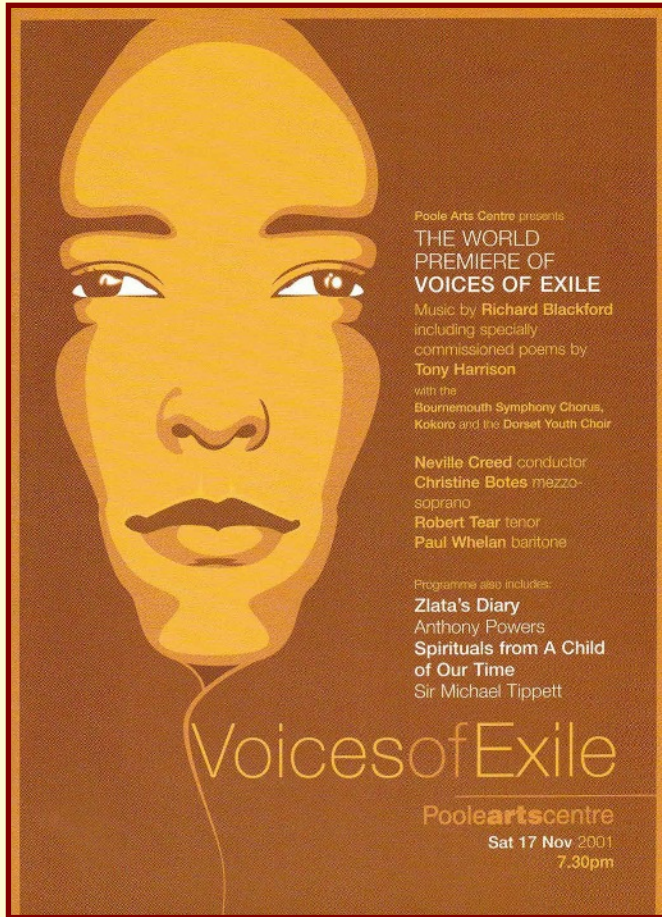


The Chorus held a party and the picture shows Chorus Master and Chorus Chairman poised to cut the anniversary cake. The Chairman at that time was Victor Thomas, seen in the blazer, with Geoffrey Hughes adding a little pressure.





## 90th birthday, November 2001



It's unusual for an organisation to celebrate its **90th** birthday, so it was a sign of vigour and confidence when the Chorus backed by Southern Arts, Poole Arts Trust and the John S. Cohen Foundation, commissioned a major new work from the British composer, Richard

Blackford. Whilst the Choir and Chorus had sung pieces written specially for it, this was the first time it had been the commissioner, paying the composer and entering the exciting creative process from conception, through breathing life into printed notes in rehearsal, to assembling all necessary elements for the first performance. Importantly, the composer's brief included a part for a

children's choir. The extended **Voices of Exile** project was organised to generate involvement across the community. Three TV programmes were broadcast by Meridian Broadcasting, the ITV company that served the South East and South of England: *The Frame* a 30 minute documentary about the commissioning of **Voices of Exile**, interviews with artists and poets, and the history of the Chorus. The work's première in Poole was recorded and broadcast by Meridian as two programmes over two weekends drawing a huge audience in its region. A linked education project involved two schools. Maria Eugenia Bravo Calderara, the exiled Chilean poet, worked with 6th form students from Bournemouth School and St Peter's School. The library service in Bournemouth mounted a linked poetry competition and Helen Donaldson curated a photographic exhibition featuring work by refugees living in Bournemouth at the Poole Arts Centre to complement the work's first performance.

**Refugee**, the original working title, was changed to **Voices of Exile** shortly before the final draft was completed. Richard set poems written by exiled poets, framed by a prologue and epilogue freshly commissioned from Tony Harrison. The world première was given at Poole Arts Centre on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2001 followed by the London première on the 19<sup>th</sup> November to a packed Royal Festival Hall. The Chorus was joined by the BSO contemporary music ensemble Kokoro, and the Dorset Youth Choir (now the BSYC) under the baton of Neville Creed, with soloists Christine Botes (mezzo soprano), Robert Tear (tenor) and Paul Whelan (baritone). A number of the exiled poets featured in the work attended the concerts: Gergyi Tsering Gonpo, Maria Calderara, Tanya Czarovska, Mohammed Khaki, with Tony Harrison attending both performances.

*Blackford, as a deeply literate and assured composer, senses precisely the response needed by each poem. And he has the skill to set them with a graphic immediacy which never descends to bathos. In such a work as this, this skill is rare.*

Hilary Finch, The Times 21/11/2001



Richard Blackford had experience of multi-faceted music including Community Opera and his new work included traditional music recorded in places such as Macedonia, Bengal and Somalia that had seen people exiled from their home-land during the 20th century, often fleeing at short notice in fear of their lives taking with them only songs and poetry. Blackford acknowledged the influence of David Fanshawe's *African Sanctus*, the work that had contributed much to the renewal and redefinition of the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus.

Tony Harrison's poetry and Richard's music, linked with sound-bites from recordings the composer had prepared from folksongs and the voices of poets reading in their native tongues, plunges listeners into the world of the refugee. It is a discomfiting subject, yet one which Blackford determined to confront after he was introduced to the work of the Medical Foundation and Prisoners of Conscience in 2000. Before the interval of the work's London première, Juliet Stephenson presented "*Voices*" a programme of humour and drama



Richard Blackford cutting the Choir's centenary cake after a performance of his *Not In My Time* in Cheltenham.

which included Alan Rickman, Bill Patterson, Fiona Shaw, Emma Thompson and other celebrated actors. Their performance and *Voices of Exile* were given in aid of the *Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture* and the *Prisoners of Conscience Appeal Fund*.



The Choir, which started by vigorously championing the light English music of its time, was continuing, doing perhaps a more critical task, ensuring that a British composer in the challenging environment of the 21st century had the support to allow him to pen and hear an oratorio of international social concern and commitment. The Chorus' enterprise was rewarded with a work that developed and extended models provided by Michael Tippett sixty years before in *A Child of Our Time*, and Hans Werner Henze, Blackford's teacher, in his *Das Floß der Medusa* (*The Raft of the Medusa*) that was written, but not heard, during the turbulent 1960s.

*Voices of Exile* was later recorded by David Hill, with the Philharmonia Orchestra and the London Bach Choir on the Quartz label.