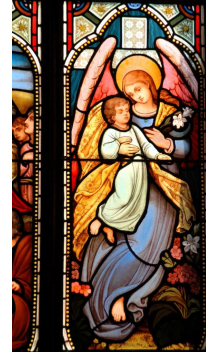




## Royal School of Church Music (ACT Branch)



### **NEWS LETTER** **September 2009**

#### **Event Report: Celebratory Evensong, All Saints' Ainslie**

A fantastic combined choir of RSCM members and All Saints' choristers made a wonderful contribution to the Evensong which celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of All Saints' being a member of the RSCM on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2009.

Music included Howells *Collegium Regale*, Les Davey's prize winning anthem *Choristers' Prayer* and Adrian Wintle's 2007 version of *The Lord's Prayer*. The psalm was sung to Anglican Chant.

Mulled wine and soup completed the evening, which was supplied by the members of the parish. A certificate of long standing membership was presented to the parish by the RSCM.

#### **Report on the RSCM "Church Music Skills Programme"**

I was interested to discover some more about the recently developed "Church Music Skills" programme that is offered through the RSCM. I figured that the best way to learn about how the programme worked was to enrol in it myself. This is what I have found so far:

The programme is web-based and self directed, so for the most part the assignments can be done as fast or slow as desired (there are, however, a couple of time-restricted assignments within the course).

You can choose between a pre-set programme which works towards an award or do individual units for your own interest. You can also choose your own discipline (or mix of disciplines) which vary between organ playing, cantoring, musical director and various other options.

In completing the introductory units I've found that my organ practise is now much more organised, my goals are clearer and I've found some of the suggestions made by the tutors very useful.

If you feel that the Church Music Skills programme may benefit you, visit <http://www.rscm.com/education/skills.php> for more details.

## **Two Reviews of an ex-Canberra Organist's Recent Publications**

### **Review – Peter Guy *Newcastle Mass***

Peter Guy is well known at Wesley Uniting Church in Canberra having been their Assistant Director of Music following graduation from the University of Newcastle. He was also a tutor for the ACT Organ School. Now, the Director of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle, Peter has followed in the steps of a predecessor, the late Michael Dudman, composing a Congregational Setting of the Eucharist.

Upon hearing about this new piece, I ordered copies for the Wesley Choir and we sang it as a choir item at our May Communion, requesting feedback from the Congregation. This was unanimously very favourable with comments like – *it's very singable; it has a good range and I like it!*

The next month, having ordered copies for the Congregation, we sang it as intended by Peter with everyone joining in at the appropriate time within the Communion Service. From our first hand experience, I can thoroughly recommend this new setting of the Eucharist for congregational use.

The Congregational part which contains the melody line is \$2 per copy and the Full Score is \$10. Copies are available from the composer – [peterguy81@me.com](mailto:peterguy81@me.com)

Graeme Brown  
Director of Music  
Wesley Uniting Church

### **Review – Peter Guy *Organ Classics from Newcastle Cathedral***

As an ex Newcastle Cathedral Choir girl, I was interested to hear the new CD released by Peter Guy, the Director of Music at Newcastle Cathedral.

Unsurprisingly, the playing is excellent and there is a wonderful range of colours produced on the magnificent organ.

The CD includes pieces by Percy Whitlock (*Four Extemporisations*), Langlais (*Fete*) and SS Wesley (*Choral Song and Fugue*) and a wonderful arrangement of *Come Sweet Death* by J.S. Bach (which was new to me and has rapidly become one of my favourites). Also on the CD is a the *Introcution, Pastorale and Fugue on "Leoni"* by Keith Noake, a former director of music at Newcastle Cathedral and the person who holds responsibility for introducing the RSCM into the area several decades ago!

Because the CD wasn't packed with the common organ pieces, I found this CD refreshing and educational. I wouldn't recommend it to someone who didn't know organ music already, but for those interested in some unusual works and some wonderful playing, this is very much worth adding to the collection.

Copies are available from Peter Guy – [peterguy81@me.com](mailto:peterguy81@me.com)

Gemma Dashwood

## **Musical education (or lack of) in schools, and the resultant influence on church music participation**

Thinking back to the dim, distant recesses of my childhood, I recall that church music was always around, whether at school, where I was fortunate enough to attend a school with a strong music tradition that included choral and organ music, or at home, having a father who often played organ at church. So becoming involved in church music myself was just a natural part of life, for me and for many of my contemporaries.

Although I have no first-hand knowledge of what passes for music education in the average Australian school today, I have the impression that the vast majority of children at present never learn to understand or perform music of any great substance, especially of a sacred nature.

That, along with the fact that very few children ever set foot inside a church, means that most are probably quite unaware of the existence of the English choral tradition, and sadly, will never experience its beauty, or draw inspiration from it. This perhaps explains why we have so few young people joining church choirs today. It does not bode well for the future. Despite the RSCM's best intentions, it cannot greatly influence what happens within schools or private homes.

My one hope is that there will eventually be greater emphasis placed on the study of music in schools, by governments, educators, and the public, as the enormous flow-on benefits become more widely appreciated and accepted.

Recently, ABC Classic FM's *Keys To Music* program ran a series of four programs on music education. The host, Graham Abbott, spoke at length with conductor and educator Richard Gill. Their observations were most interesting. I have just been relistening to one of these programs, which can be downloaded as podcasts from the Classic FM website. Here are just a few of the points they made, which, if adopted universally, would give hope for the future of music-making generally, and certainly for music in church:

**Gill:** *All music has a cantabile - or a 'sung' - element about it, and we can teach an enormous amount about music from singing. And this can start at a very early age... From the experience of singing as a young child, we can learn an incredible repertoire of songs and develop the musical memory. We can develop the memory for patterns... and from that, we can teach all the concepts of music. We can teach notation (that is to say, pitch and rhythm), dynamics... all of that rudimentary knowledge about music can be taught from the voice.*

**Abbott:** *Music is good for kids. Period. Because it has so many other flow-on effects. There is a very large body of evidence now, and it's irrefutable, MRI scanning that shows what happens in the brain when certain musical triggers are received... and this crosses bounds in the brain from language to maths skills... and music is the only discipline that covers all of those things simultaneously, and can be handled by a four-year-old.*

**Gill:** *But I also want to say at the same time that the reason we teach music is that music is "good" in itself, and we teach it so that children can make their own music... You're giving a child an experience in the abstract that no other subject will give it. The brain is wired, in a very special way, to listen to two or three things at once, and to process a whole lot of information.*

**Abbott:** *Singing is fundamentally important to good instrumental teaching too. Kodaly said: "To teach a child an instrument without first giving him preparatory training, and without developing singing, reading, and dictating to the highest level, along with the playing, is to*

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*build upon sand. It is a long accepted truth that singing provides the best start to music education. Moreover, children should learn to read music before they're provided with any instrument." That's an interesting one!*

**Gill:** *Approach instrumental music through the voice. So that you teach all the precepts and the concepts before you get to the instrument. So that when you get to the instrument you are then dealing directly with the physical problems of the instrument, rather than trying to teach rhythm, pitch, notation, dynamics... all the basic work has been done. So you can pick up the violin and think about the beautiful sound you are making, because you know what the note is.*



**Abbott:** *Singing in a choir has social benefits, health benefits, mental benefits, intellectual benefits. I get sick of people saying that sport is good for kids, and that it's OK to be an elite sports person, but in the same breath to say that arts activities are not useful and are "elitist". I mean, let's have elite sports people, but let's also have elite architects, and accountants, and defence personnel, and musicians...*

Amen to that!

*Nigel Poole*

#### **Upcoming RSCM Events:**

##### **Hymnfest at St Philip's**



3pm 1<sup>st</sup> November 2009

Come and join us for an afternoon of hymn singing and solo performances to raise money for the restoration of the beautiful organ at St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor.

##### **2010 Summer School**

3-10 January 2010, Adelaide

A week of wonderful music, challenges and social gatherings. A must for all church musicians.

More information at <http://www.rscmaustralia.org.au/SS.htm> or e-mail

[SS10@rscmasutralia.org.au](mailto:SS10@rscmasutralia.org.au)

Other relevant events:

##### **Hymnfest at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church**

2.30pm 25<sup>th</sup> October 2009



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