



Friends of the Auburn Tower Newsletter

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Vivat Regina Concert in June 2012

This musical celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of the accession of Queen Elizabeth II was warmly received by a sizeable audience. The main performers were the Ashton-Smith Singers directed by David Ashton-Smith, organist Thomas Heywood, soprano Eleanor Kerr, the Josh Rogan Brass Ensemble and pianist Robyn Womersley.

In the first part of the program we heard some of the music performed at the Coronation on June 2, 1953 including Sir Hubert Parry's eight part anthem 'I was Glad' (these words from Psalm 122 being sung at James II's 1685 coronation to a setting by Henry Purcell); Handel's 'Zadok the Priest', which has been sung at every coronation since 1727; Vaughan Williams' setting of the hymn 'All people that on earth do dwell'; and the Gordon Jacob arrangement of 'God Save the Queen'. For 'I was Glad' choristers from the Australian Boys Choral Institute sang the 'Vivat Regina' section which is usually omitted in 'non-royal' performances. The Ashton-Smith Singers gave an uplifting performance of this work culminating with well executed high B flats from the sopranos. The young brass players with their outstanding intonation and tone were stunning in this and the other pieces in which they played.

An ensemble from the choir sang 'Rejoice in the Lord' attributed to John Redford, and Thomas Heywood gave a brilliant performance of Sir William Walton's march 'Orb and Sceptre', also composed for the coronation. It was transcribed for organ by Sir William McKie, a former Melburnian who was Organist and Director of Music at Westminster Abbey at the time of the Coronation. This was Walton's second march for a coronation, 'Crown Imperial' having been performed for George VI in 1937.

After interval we heard a selection of lighter British music by Ivor Novello, Lionel Bart, Freddie Mercury, Lennon & McCartney plus a medley of World War II songs and the well known 'Floral Dance'. The impressive soprano soloist, Eleanor Kerr was heard in some of these items. What a pity she didn't sing 'Rule Britannia' or 'Land of Hope and Glory' since her voice would have been well suited to such pieces! One of these could have replaced Freddie Mercury's 'Bohemian Rhapsody' which, in my opinion, as a choral arrangement was musically disjointed and compositionally not of the same standard as the Lennon/McCartney composition 'Eleanor Rigby' or the remainder of the program.

Just as I was wondering why there was not a second organ solo on the program we were given a magnificent performance of Elgar's 'Imperial March', a most fitting choice since it was composed to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897. In this piece the disposition of the Auburn organ did greater justice to Heywood's impeccable playing than in the earlier 'Orb and Sceptre' where the instrument (particularly the voicing and character of the reeds and mixture of the swell division) did not do full justice to his performance.

Overall the choral work was well balanced and of a high standard.

The concert concluded with a stirring performance by choir and audience of Hubert Parry's setting of William Blake's poem 'Jerusalem'. The audience had also sung with enthusiasm in some of the earlier pieces. It is wonderful to see this historic and architecturally significant church used for such concerts, since it is an excellent auditorium with favourable sightlines for the audience.

Review by Colin J Jenkins

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2012 Concert Season and other events

Following the success of our first concerts for 2012, below is the final concert for the Friends. The concert held on Sunday, September 09 introduced many of us to the music of medieval Europe. Helen Dell was ably assisted by performers on such unusual instruments as the oud and a rain stick. Sadly, this was a big day for concerts in the area and our audience was much depleted. However, those who did attend were treated to some enjoyable music provided by a talented group. Helen has since sent us a message to say how much the performers also enjoyed the concert in a such a great performing space.

We will finish off the year with a bang (or at least a blast) from our own Fincham Organ. Please come along and encourage your friends and lovers of dramatic organ music to share this occasion.

Also, be reminded that the AGM of the Friends is on **Wednesday 19 September at 8:00pm**. Father Tony Noble has accepted our invitation to speak on his experiences obtaining funding and other support for the restoration of St Marks in Fitzroy (see below some information on Father Tony). All Friends and their friends are very welcome to attend the AGM - though only financial members as of 30 June 2012 are able to vote.

Sunday
November 18
2:30 pm

Organ Recital Australian born and internationally acclaimed organist Dr Gordon Atkinson plays the historic Fincham organ

Works by J S Bach, Jean Langlais and more
www.trybooking.com/BHQF

Speaker at the AGM - Father Tony Noble

Father Tony Noble, an Anglican priest for more than 30 years, has agreed to speak at the Friends of the Auburn Tower Annual General Meeting which will be held on September 19, 2012 at 8:00pm in the Eileen Pawsey Room, Auburn Uniting Church complex, Oxley Road, Hawthorn.

Father Tony was instrumental in leading his community through the restoration of St Marks in Fitzroy. Conversations had commenced about the restoration of the church. Some people were keen that something should be done but such a project seemed too daunting and beyond them. However, once the Vestry had decided on the undertaking Father Noble committed himself 100%, and became the public face of the appeal. An architect's report outlined the dimensions of the project with the congregation needing to raise \$500,000. This was raised in three years.

Father Tony set about fixing the roof, the floor, and the windows of an important inner suburban historic church complex. Now a stunning building to simply visit, St Mark's boasts the only Harrison pipe organ in the country. This king of organs - Westminster Abbey has one - was donated by a church in Oxford.

As part of his talk at the AGM, Father Tony will offer a very valuable insight into the trajectory of a major church restoration project, a project which has many similarities to the challenges facing the Friends of the Tower.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Have you forgotten to pay your renewal? We will be sending out reminder notices after the AGM, but if you are not sure whether you have renewed or not, please give me a call on 9819 1899, Cheryl, Executive Officer.

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