SPIRE

St. Stephen's
Community Magazine
Autumn 2010
Issue 6



InSpire:

Making a Joyful Noise
A message from the Vicar's desk

We Will Remember Them
A tribute to some of our local war veterans

Musical Youth
Dulwich Youth Orchestra

The Spire Nearly Interviews...
Florence and the Machine

And The Beat Goes On
Meet our new Musical Director



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WELCOME

Andrea Hensher
Editor



We're following a largely musical theme in this edition of the Spire, St Stephen's community magazine. There's something for everyone in music, whether your taste is for the classical or the contemporary, the conventional or the unusual.

St Stephens is known for its strong musical tradition, ably developed and extended by Michael Spencer, now retiring as Musical Director. In this issue, we introduce his successor, local musician Kit Perona-Wright. Our curate has a near-miss with Florence Welch from the band Florence and the Machine, and also discovers Dulwich Youth Orchestra, a unique opportunity for young musicians in the area to perform together. You can look forward to a feast of music in our church this autumn, including the visiting Göttinger Boys Choir who will be in concert on October 16th and the UK premiere of a work for 12 cellos by Estonian composer Arvo Pärt on November 21st. For details of these and other musical and non-musical events, do check our listings on the back page. On a more sombre note, our annual remembrance falls within this season and so we hear about the dramatic exploits of two surviving local WWII veterans. We enjoyed putting this all together – hope you enjoy reading it!



We bid a fond farewell to our Musical Director Michael Spencer after 21 years at St Stephen's, and wish him all the very best for his retirement.

What a fun day we had!

Some pictures from the Family Fun Day held on 26th June







St Stephen's Church
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vicar@ststephensdulwich.org
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Reader - Mrs Trot Lavelle
trotl@ukonline.co.uk
Churchwardens
Joan Greenwood & Patrick Robathan
churchwarden1@ststephensdulwich.org
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The team:
Andrea Hensher, Nick Davies, Sarah Bucknall, Jessica Davies & Michael Goodman.
Let us know what you think at **Spire@ststephensdulwich.org**

Making a Joyful Noise

Revd Bernhard Schünemann

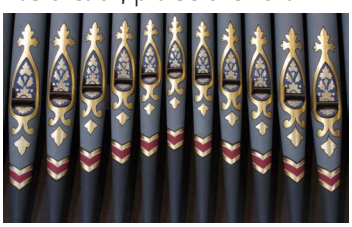


Albert Einstein once remarked "When the angels in heaven are working they are playing Bach. But when they are relaxing and having spare time they are playing Mozart." At St Stephen's here in South Dulwich music plays a central part in our core activity, the Christian praise and worship of God. The reason for this is the transformative power of music.

Encountering God means being changed, being given the energy to change the world around you. We can experience that when we sing hymns as part of our worship. We stand up and fill our lungs with air, sing more or less in harmony with one another, and our minds, souls and bodies engage with tune and poetry. We leave behind or put into perspective things that are worrying us and we sit down again often feeling strengthened and encouraged. Music has always been part of Judaeo-Christian worship, it is much described in our Old Testament (psalms 148 to150 for example), and a substantial majority of Western music composed over the last thousand years and still regularly listened to today deals in religious subject matter.

Many people tell me that they have no formal faith but they absolutely love attending a service of choral evensong when the opportunity arises. And this is another important aspect of the spirituality of music: it can transport people to a spiritual realm without making doctrinal demands, it can create a unity by making us feel part of the same moment without attempting to deny that there are differences between us. During the recent collapse of Soviet Communism in some countries music played a key part in a peaceful transition. In Estonia for example all citizens (all 1.2 million of them!) assembled in their song festival sites and sang their way to freedom, as part of the 'singing revolution', a revolution famous for not shedding a single drop of blood.

In the west we are only beginning to discover composers who composed a completely new kind of music during that time, music with a real message of transcendence, transformation and peace. The Polish composer Henryk Górecki and the Estonian Arvo Pärt are the most well known among these. Interestingly they also represent something of a triple cross-over between classical, pop and religious spheres. This autumn we will be presenting a rich diet of musical activity, both in formal worship and additional concerts. In the words of Psalm 150 'Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord.'



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A tribute to some of our local war veterans

by His Honour Michael Goodman...



Our annual Remembrance Sunday service, which will be held around the recently restored War Memorial, will provide a moment to reflect on the diminishing ranks of World War II veterans, to whom we owe so much. We are fortunate, at St Stephen's, to have two among our number: George Key and Jeff Jeffree, who met at the Church in the 1960s, became friends and have since 'paraded' together on Remembrance Sunday. Their stories bear retelling.

George had been called up early as a member of the Territorial Army, and was serving in Palestine with the Middlesex Yeomanry when war broke out. He then became attached to the 22nd Armoured Brigade, part of the 7th Armoured Division (the Desert Rats) and fought as a Tank Commander in the North African campaign. In November 1941 he was captured near the Egyptian/Libyan border. After six weeks in enemy hands he escaped, returned to fight in the desert and then to rejoin his unit in Italy, returning to Britain in time for D Day and the invasion of occupied France.

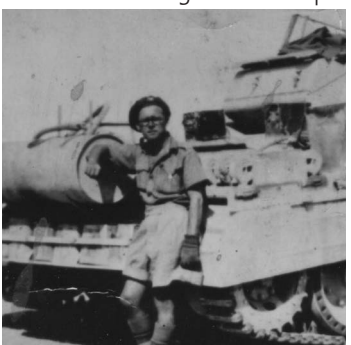


Jeff joined up in 1940 and served as a Gunner in the 68th Regiment of the Royal Artillery in North Africa until, in June 1942, he and others were captured by the Germans at Tobruk and handed over to the Italians. They were then



transported to Sicily and on to Italy where Jeff was one of the few to survive a typhoid outbreak.

After Italy surrendered in September 1943 Jeff took to the hills but was recaptured by German forces and taken to a POW camp near Leipzig. There he remained until April 1945 when he managed to escape.





He and a few others successfully commandeered a Mercedes car which a Nazi official had abandoned and Jeff drove it to an airport held by US troops who arranged for him to be flown to Paris. After a couple of days resting and celebrating, he was flown home.

In 1989 Jeff and George visited the War Cemetery at El Alamein, where Jeff managed to find the graves of some of his fallen comrades. They will never forget their trip to El Alamein or the sacrifice made by those who are commemorated there. They and others will be remembered at our service on Sunday 14th November at 10.30 to which all are warmly welcomed.



Running away to join the orchestra

Revd Nick Davies



If you have a budding musician at home, you will be used to the sound of scales coming from the bedroom and ferrying them to their lessons. But have you ever imagined them, tutored by professionals from the great London orchestras, playing Aida's Grand March with over one hundred others as part of a full orchestra?

It's not as unlikely as it sounds. Indeed every school holiday 120 young people, aged 7-17, have just that opportunity, thanks to the Dulwich Youth Orchestra.

Formed in the early 70s, the orchestra employs twenty tutors over a week of morning rehearsals for a concert on Friday. As well as the full orchestra, musicians divide into a string ensemble, a wind band and a symphony orchestra. Last summer's concert at Alleyn's included everything from Grieg and Britten to music from Shrek and Star Wars.

"The orchestra gives the young people a sense of music making together. It also fills a niche for those who go to schools where there aren't orchestras and bands. It opens a whole world for the children that perhaps even their parents have never had," says Musical Director Barbara Dalton, who is also Director of Music at Alleyn's Junior School.

Past members of the youth orchestra have gone on to play at the National Youth Orchestra, the Philharmonia and the Royal Opera House, and one, the cellist and composer Thomas Hewitt Jones, has recently written music for the London Olympics.

For those attending now, the attraction seems to be more about having fun;

"I came last year because friends were going from school," says trumpeter James. Meanwhile Emily, who has been playing the saxophone for four years and is working towards grade eight says, "It is just fun playing music, being around friends and learning about how orchestras work." Asked whether they would recommend it to friends, James is in no doubt. "Definitely come because it's really fun and you get to perform in front of the whole of Dulwich."

Drawn from over forty south London schools these youngsters ranged from grades three to eight and beyond. Brushing off questions about nerves, Imogen, who plays the violin and the harp, says "I'm really looking forward to the concert. It's informal yet formal at the same time. It's really nice and the audience is really supportive."

So it seems that you don't have to go far, if you want to run away to join the orchestra. The next course runs from 27th-31st December at Dulwich College ending with a concert in the Great Hall. The cost is £120 for the five days tuition and bursaries are available. Book early, as places are limited!

For more information visit: www.dyodulwich.org







Florence and the Machine

Revd Nick Davies



When the editorial team decided our music issue needed an article on 'local girl made good', Florence Welch, I felt that it was only fair for me to step forward and volunteer.

If you don't know who she is, you're part of dwindling minority. Florence, or Flo to her fans, took the country by storm last year with the release of her first album. 'Between two Lungs' received huge critical acclaim and soon made it to the top of the album charts. Meanwhile the Times describes her as "the most peculiar and most highly acclaimed female singer of the moment."

Florence grew up in Camberwell, went to school at Alleyn's and then the Camberwell School of Art. It seems that stardom hasn't taken her too far from home as she has recorded videos on Sydenham Hill and launched her album at the Rivoli ballroom in Brockley.

I first heard of her when I got her album as a Christmas present and I have been playing it fairly constantly ever since. It features strings, drums, choirs and fireworks. Meanwhile her own powerful voice has an operatic quality which has been described as 'a slice of Americana' and a cross between 'crooning and primal blues'.

So - filled with hope for an interview, I rang her publicist at Island records, hoping to meet in a hip Hoxton gastro-pub, maybe followed-up by an invite to a photo shoot in a trendy loft studio. Sadly, it wasn't to be. "Florence isn't doing any promo at the moment," says Jasper her publicist. It seems I hadn't done enough to explain quite how influential the Spire is as an opinion former in south Dulwich.

> *"It's something overwhelming and all encompassing..."*

Florence has said, "I want my music to sound like throwing yourself out of a tree, or off a tall building, or as if you're being sucked down into an ocean and you can't breathe. It's something overwhelming and all encompassing that fills you up, and you're either going to explode with it, or just going to disappear."

She apparently has a gothic interest in the smoke and gold of Catholicism. So much so, that she was frankly disappointed to find out she was technically Church of England. I even had my opening question, "Nietzsche said he could only believe in a God who could dance, what do you think?"

Sadly, I'll never know. I guess I'll just have to wait for the tricky second album. Due out next year, it promises a heady mix of science, dance and darkness. I might also check our some local charity shops, apparently that is where Flo gets her stage outfits. I might yet get to ask my question...





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Kit Perona-Wright, St Stephen's new Musical Director

By Jessica Davies



From September, St Stephen's music-making will be led by a young and talented local musician. Kit Perona-Wright, currently Head of Keyboard at Dulwich College Prep, says he is "thrilled" with his new appointment.

Although only 30, Kit has a wealth of relevant experience, including a four year stint working for the Royal School of Church Music. He also has a Masters in English Cathedral Music and Liturgy, and an impressive array of other qualifications, including diplomas from the Royal College of Organists in both choral direction and organ playing. "Every qualification I have is in church music in some way," he says, "so leading or being involved with sacred music is in my blood!"
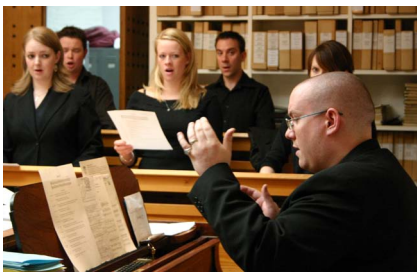
Kit, who lives locally with Emma and their one-year-old daughter, Molly, grew up in a musical household in Ashtead, Surrey. By the time he took up the organ at 13, Kit had already mastered the piano, French horn and recorder. "As a teenager I became fascinated by the mechanisms and the sound of the organ," he recalls. "Very quickly I got into playing for services. It was a real baptism by fire, having dozens of anthems and hymns thrown at me, and having to stumble through them somehow – very useful training, and I loved it!"

He read music at Exeter, with organ his primary study; was a tenor choral scholar at Exeter Cathedral and latterly its organ scholar. It was during this time that he met Emma, a soprano, and founded The Serlo Consort, a professional chamber choir and instrumental group of which he remains Artistic Director. He is also the conductor for the Carshalton Choral Society and accompanist for various London choirs.

His job at the Prep, which he will run alongside his new role at St Stephen's, "has given me a relationship with St Stephen's, as I have played at the church many times for services as the school organist," Kit says.

He now wants to build on the church's strong musical tradition. "I hope my involvement with local schools will help attract more young people into the choir. I want to get the word out to all the local schools that they are welcome to come and join in, that we will tackle a host of musical styles, that it will be a place to learn new skills and make new friends."

As a practising Christian, Kit is also delighted that his appointment is in "my own, current, parish church." He says: "I genuinely feel there is a lovely, vibrant atmosphere at St Stephen's. I am very happy to have been appointed, but also look forward to coming and worshipping at St Stephen's with my family."







Autumn at St Stephen's

September

Sunday 5th

10am

Performance of two Handel Arias as part of our main Service. Visiting preacher: Revd Dr Teresa Morgan (Oriel College, Oxford)

Saturday 11th

7.30 – 9.30pm

Barn Dance in the Millennium Hall

Sunday 19th

10am

First Sunday with our new Director of Music Mr Kit Perona-Wright

October

Sunday 3rd

10am

Harvest Festival - All Age Eucharist followed by 'bring and share' lunch

Saturday 16th

7pm

Concert by Göttingen Boys Choir - Göttinger Knabenchor (www.goettinger-knabenchor.de)

Sunday 17th

10am

Göttingen Boys Choir sing in main service

Sunday 31st

10am

All Saints Icons Project

November

Sunday 7th

6pm

Special All Souls Memorial Service with music by our choir

Sunday 14th

10.30am

Remembrance Day Service

Saturday 20th

7.30pm

Quiz Night with Fish and Chip supper in the Millennium Hall

Sunday 21st

10am

UK premier of the Missa Brevis by Arvo Pärt for 12 Cellos. This work was written for the 12 Cellos of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall

Sunday 28th

10am

Confirmation service with the Bishop of Woolwich

December:

Saturday 4th

12 – 3pm

Christmas Bazaar - Millennium Hall

Regular Services

Sunday:

8am Holy Communion (BCP)

10am Sung Parish Eucharist with Sunday School during term time

Monday to Friday:

8.30am Silent Prayer followed at 8.45am by Morning Prayer

Wednesday:

9.45am Holy Eucharist

