

## **MUSIC REPORT FOR P.C., NOVEMBER 2019**

The last record I can find of a Music Report to Parish Council is October 2018 – one year ago.

Here is a report making reference to the items mentions in that report, updating on progress.

### **SERVICES AND LITURGY**

As in Oct 2018, we continue to focus musical provision on the 10am Eucharist and monthly Evensong. Upcoming special services include the Advent Procession and Carol Service. Christmas Eve this year will have only one Eucharist, meaning we will be able to help provide better-resourced and supported music for both the 'Midnight' service and Christmas morning (always in the past a bit of an afterthought)

Evolutions in the liturgical/musical provision include the decision to have either a Gloria or an Introit, but not both, on any given Sunday (to keep the portion of the service before the Liturgy of the Word, including the announcements, from becoming disproportionately long). We are also attempting to include more choral repertoire by female composers this year.

Last year, we had started using a cantor at summer services; this summer, we went further and included a choir or small group of singers (in several cases, alumnae who were in town for vacation) at June and July services. This had a congenial effect on the worship, but I am reviewing this in light of the ramifications on my available work time and on the department budget.

### **CHOIRS AND PERSONNEL**

We continue the two-choir model.

In October 2018 I mentioned that we had reduced our choral scholars to four, one of which was to be paid through the Sutton Fund (along with the organ scholar). This autumn it became apparent that we did have funds for five, though still balancing the draw more evenly between MacRae and Sutton. The summer music may mean, though, that we are slightly over budget (cut backs will be made in other areas to compensate).

New Choral Scholars this autumn are Anton Sokalski and Aniela Erzinger; Kyla Fradette moves to a Scholarship from a student bursary. Anne van der Sloot and Felix Butterfield returned this season.

New in the Sutton Organ Scholarship is Emily Markwart, a fourth-year UVic student (whose home parish is St Andrew's Anglican, Langley BC). Of choristers and scholars who moved on, I am proud to report that Ethan Hill (Sutton Organ Scholarship) is now Organ Scholar at Christ Church Montréal (attending McGill). Alana Hayes has stepped down from the MacRae Scholarship in order to concentrate on her thesis, but is still singing with us as able.

Membership in the Choristers stands at around 16 this year, down slightly from the 19 reported in 2018 (losses are to the Synod decision this summer, health of family members, and fewer students available).

The Community Choir stands at the same strength as last year, with a core of dedicated and enthusiastic singers.

### **FACILITIES**

The new lighting in the church was anticipated in Oct 2018; everyone will agree that it is a huge improvement. This is particularly noticeable in concerts and rehearsals. The lighting in the chancel benefits somewhat from spillover, though, sadly, we suffer still from inadequate and shadowy lighting in the choir stalls (the decision was made that lighting for the choir would be too expensive/difficult).

Cassocks have been largely replaced with new ones from J and M sewing in the UK. We will likely 'top up' our supply with a few more in the coming months, but we can say with some certainty that we probably have the smartest cassocks of any choir in the diocese....!

Piano maintenance was mentioned in 2018 as being 'on hold' whilst we got a sense of needs for the organ; this is still largely the case. I have been taking an approach of letting rental groups pay for tuning.

Exciting news regarding the organ is that we are starting in on the backlog of needed maintenance with a console upgrade using used parts from the organ at St Andrew's Wesley, Vancouver – an opportunity identified by our local (retired – sort of!) organ builder, Grant Smalley. This should address the most pressing need (the failures of components in the console mentioned in the 2018 report), with the advantage of being done on a shorter time frame (February or March) and at lower cost than would normally be the case, meaning the console should be in much improved shape for the RCCO convention in the summer. I am grateful for the support of the wardens and finance group for this project!

New since last year's report, with the dramatic increase of drug- and dealing-related activity on the neighbouring streets and particularly on our grounds, is the question of how to provide security for rehearsals and other events on our campus. Staff and Wardens are currently exploring this issue.

## CONCERTS

The Victoria Baroque continues to present their season of concerts at St John's; we have two collaborative concerts with the St John's choir this season, the first of which is Sunday night, presenting music of Lotti and Bach.

The notion of reinstating a less formal concert series mentioned in 2018 is still on the 'to consider' list.

## COLLABORATIVE MATTERS

We continue to be grateful for the collegial attitude of Donald Hunt and his newly-appointed assistant, Mark McDonald, of Christ Church – collaborations have included Ascension and Pride services, some funerals, and, once again, Scholarship Auditions. Christ Church has a much bigger 'machinery' and budget, though, for promotion, support, and personnel, and is embarking on a major fundraising campaign through the Victoria Foundation to position the Cathedral as the home of 'Musical Excellence in a Sacred Space' for Victoria. If we wish to continue to be respected and known for liturgical and other music, we will need to consider how we will meet the challenge of a newly energised and resourced 'competition'.

The planning for the RCCO festival in July 2020 continues; several concerts and events will be at St John's, featuring both the Casavant Organ and the smaller Smalley Continuo Organ.

## FINANCE AND FACILITY

Progress has been made on these items mentioned in 2018:

- As reported above, there is significant progress underway with regard to the organ
- A plan is being made for the storage of the extra staging in the church

Other matters mentioned in 2018 are largely outstanding, though:

- The MacRae fund needs strengthening;
- There is no choir vestry space; the area behind the organ on Sunday mornings is a jumble of coats, bags, and belongings (largely strewn on the floor)
- the new Cassocks are sharing space with wet outerware and folding tables in the back hallway

With some of these issues in mind—fundraising for instrument maintenance and Scholarship Fund renewal; support and promotion for events and concerts current and yet-to-be imagined; the need to identify how our programme can best serve the parish and the wider community and what its position is vis-à-vis other church music programmes; and how to create vision for facilities which support the music programme and other church programmes in community-engaged and neighbourhood-enlivening way—I am considering the creation of a Music Group/Committee/Guild (name still t.b.d.). I welcome suggestions and ideas in this regard.