

## The Parish Church of St John-at-Hampstead

### Music Notes ~ June 2022

We continue to welcome visiting organists during the month of June, and are very fortunate to have Richard Gowers, Paul Plummer and Timothy Wakerell providing us with a selection of fine voluntaries. Moreover, it will be a particular pleasure to welcome our Organist-elect, Joshua Ryan, who will be playing for the Ordination service on Saturday 25th. The first of our visitors, Paul Plummer, will be helping us celebrate the Platinum Jubilee at Evensong on Sunday 5th by playing Elgar's *Imperial March* and providing the rousing accompaniment to Parry's *I was glad*. Our Jubilee celebrations also include the full anthem *The Queen shall rejoice* written for the coronation of Queen Anne in 1702 by William Turner, and the verse anthem *O Lord, grant the King a long life* by William Child (who himself lived to the age of c. 97) composed at the Restoration of the Monarchy for Charles II.

On Trinity Sunday the Junior Choir will be joining us for Schubert's *Mass in G* at the All-Age service, and in the evening the anthem will be sung from a newly-published edition of the Trinity Respond *Honor, virtus et potestas* by Thomas Tallis, in which plainsong alternates with five-part polyphony. On Sunday 19th we will be performing the anthem *Where thou reignest* with music by Franz Schubert that was once a great favourite of Anglican choirs but which has largely fallen out of use, probably due to the modern preference for performing German church music in the original German. The problem with this particular piece is that the original was not a sacred piece at all, but the partsong with piano *Schicksalslenker* (also *Des Tages Weihe*), so rather like the Mozart 'anthem' *Have mercy, O Lord* that we sang a few months ago, it is now rarely heard; however, the sacred text given to it by Webb & Docker in Novello's 1897 edition makes it suitable for the season of Trinity.

Also at Evensong on Sunday 19th we will be performing a rarely heard setting of the canticles by William Denis Browne. A friend of Rupert Brooke, Browne studied at Clare College, Cambridge, where he wrote his Magnificat and Nunc dimittis in 1911. He studied with Charles Wood at Gonville & Caius College, and was highly thought of by many of the leading musicians of the day. Ralph Vaughan Williams noted that he had "a most musical nature" and that "his artistic judgement and perception are remarkable". He began a promising musical career, but then was killed in action in 1915. His canticles were first published by the Church Music Society in 2014.

The most famous of the Responds by Thomas Tallis is probably his *Loquebantur variis linguis*, in which the densely-wrought and excited texture seem to reflect the speaking in tongues at the first Pentecost. We shall perform this at the Ordination service on Saturday 25th, alongside his celebrated communion motet, *O sacrum convivium*. On the next day, Sunday 26th, our two main services are reversed, so that we sing Matins in the morning and then Communion in the evening, at which newly-priested Graham will be presiding. We will be very pleased to perform music selected for the service by Graham, the sumptuous eight-part *Cantus Missae* by Josef Rheinberger, and the setting of the Marian hymn *Ave maris stella* by James MacMillan. Given the rare opportunity to sing Matins, the choir will enjoy singing the most classic of all modern settings of the Morning Canticles, that composed by Herbert Howells for King's College, Cambridge. Wikipedia tells the story of its inception as follows: "In 1941, Howells took the post of acting organist of St John's College, Cambridge, standing in for Robin Orr who was away on active service in World War II. Howells attended a tea party held by Eric Milner-White, then Dean of King's College. There, he also met the Director of Music at King's, Boris Ord, and the organist [actually Precentor] of Gonville and Caius College, Patrick Hadley. The three men challenged Howells to a bet of one guinea that he could not compose a canticle setting for the Choir of King's College Chapel. Howells successfully produced a setting of the Te Deum..."; the Jubilate followed in 1944. To contrast with the rousing *fortissimo* of much of the Howells setting, our anthem is a gentle reflection on words by Julian of Norwich by Welsh composer William Mathias, ending with "All shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well".

Geoffrey Webber