

1. “Carissimi comes to Carnforth”

This was a workshop for singers to prepare Carissimi’s “Jephte” and two motets ascribed to Carissimi and perform the works in a Service at Christ Church Parish Church Carnforth on January 31st 2009. The workshop was led, and directed by, Roger Wilkes. Ann Bond was the Organist and Fr. Stephen Jones was the Officiant at the service in the evening..

While the foregoing statement sounds straightforward in its aim Roger’s task was quite daunting. Apart from Roger Wilkes and

Ann Bond, few of those present on Saturday knew of the works of Carissimi and nobody had sung them before and therefore to bring the works to a standard at which they could be performed in their proper context, as a form of 'sung' sermon, required much energy on Roger's part and a great deal of concentration on ours!

"Jephte" is not a long work and the choir sections are short and relatively easy to sight-read but the emotional content of each section required precision of both latin pronunciation and vocal timbre. The final chorus was very tragic and, according to Roger, rivalled Dido's Lament in its intensity.

Roger was most insistent that the performance context of this oratorio would have been important for its original intended congregation and therefore our performance must show the same qualities.

The motet by Carissimi "Christus Factus pro Nobis was sung by three of the soloists in a three-part setting and by the choir, joined by the soloists as a nine-part setting. Once again, this work was seemingly simple but required great concentration and precision of expression to create the required result.

The whole day was excellent. The rehearsal was divided into three sessions with breaks for lunch and tea and despite the cold day and lack of heating in the church everybody appeared to be very cheerful! Roger Wilkes inspired us throughout the day to achieve the kind of performance that he sought. His skill as a tutor was evident because I think everybody present came to share the same sense of the works that were being rehearsed. We were helped in this by our soloists who shared the day by singing out only in "Jephte" but also in the Nine-part Motet.

We were all very grateful to Ann Bond who accompanied us so well and later demonstrated her skills as Organist during the Service.

It would be remiss of me not to thank the Ladies who provided us with refreshments during our 'breaks'. After working hard in the

church it was nice to come back into the warmth of the School and be refreshed with tea and coffee.

The finale to the day was the Service at which we performed these works with conviction and a remarkable fluency considering the few hours of rehearsal. I even think Roger was pleased!

As a new member of NWEMF I really enjoyed the day and would certainly attend other workshops of this quality. I came away with a sense of achievement

With many thanks to Roger Wilkes and Ann Bond.

Charles Browne