

transpose it, adjust the tempo and even save a copy should you have a use for the .SIB file.

It does have some limitations though:

- You do need a Windows PC or laptop (not a Windows phone or Windows Surface), or an Apple Mac (and one not to be so locked-down by your employer that you cannot install the plug-in.)
- You need to be connected to the Internet to load the page, limiting what you can do on a laptop on the train etc. (There are ways round this if you are technical enough.)
- The balance between the parts is pre-set: not a problem if your part has the air, but it can be hard to distinguish your part otherwise.

David Furber

“I Will Arise”

In 2005 we recorded various items for a CD, which was eventually issued under the title “Praise Ye the Lord”. Among those items was the anonymous anthem “I Will Arise”. This well-known, lively piece is a setting of words from the story of the Prodigal Son, beginning at the point where the son decides to return home. Recently we performed the same piece at an evensong at St Paul’s, Woldingham, and thanks to Brian Stewart’s practice of recording all our performances it is possible to compare what we sounded like in 2005 with what we sound like now.

At Woldingham we numbered about 21, some people being unavoidably absent, whereas in 2005 a three-line whip meant there were about 31 of us. Curiously, you would not guess from the recordings that there was much difference in the numbers. However, this could be because of the acoustics (rather dry at the Clerkenwell Medical Mission where we made the earlier recording, warmer and a bit echoey at Woldingham) and because of the way the recordings were done (much closer up, and with several microphones, on the earlier occasion). Those differences make comparison difficult.

Again, performance specifically for the purpose of a CD to be sold to the public and (hopefully) played over and over again is bound to be different from what is oddly known as a ‘live’ recording, made when we are singing for a congregation. When our two versions are compared, the earlier one perhaps sounds just a bit more studious and inhibited – though that judgment may be coloured by my own memory of that cold winter’s day in 2005. The later performance does have greater

variation of volume and speed, but that is emphatically not to criticise the earlier one, which is very far from wooden; indeed, a reviewer writing in the WGMA Newsletter praised it for its “effective changes in pace”.

Another factor at Woldingham was that we used the anthem as a prelude to the service. That meant we made a quieter start than we might have done in other circumstances, only building up to full volume towards the end. This affected the speed, and the whole anthem took several seconds longer than it had in 2005.

The PTYL version was in general excellent, but I think it did have one defect. In this anthem the air is in the soprano, and in this the sopranos were not always strong enough to compete with the tenors and basses. At Woldingham we happened to have a particularly strong soprano line, and that gave a better balance.

The anthem includes a short soprano solo, and here a contrast between the two performances is obvious. In 2005 this solo was performed by Gillian Ford in a pure choirboy-like treble, accompanied by a bassoon (which I think was recorded from too close a position). Very sadly, Gillian has since died. At Woldingham we had the sweet clarity of Joanna Lewis, and she was accompanied tactfully by the softer sound of the serpent. Both singers were excellent, but at Woldingham the instrument complemented the voice better.

In the end, I don’t think one can draw any conclusions as to whether we have changed our style over the last 9 years. Certainly it would be very rash to attempt to do so on the basis of a single anthem. Every performance is a unique re-creation. How we sound on any particular occasion is affected so much by factors such as the forces available to us and the nature of the building we are performing in. Not that we are at the mercy of these things. The question is how we adapt to them and meet the challenges they bring. And that, of course, is one of the abiding delights and fascinations of making music.

Adrian West

Dates for next Term

Sept 3 & 17: Oct 1, 15 & 29; Nov 12 & 26

We have the following commitments so far for the Autumn term:-

Saturday 8th November Concert St Peter’s Arkley

Wednesday 3rd December Carols at St George’s German Church Alie St