

**Bangor University**

## **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**New Voice :**

**the patterns and provisions for girl choristers in the English cathedral choirs**

Mackey, Amanda

*Award date:*  
2015

*Awarding institution:*  
Bangor University

[Link to publication](#)

### **General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Download date: 11. Jul. 2024

# NEW VOICE

The Patterns and Provisions for Girl Choristers  
in the English Cathedral Choirs

Amanda Mackey

Dissertation submitted in whole fulfilment of the requirement  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Bangor University  
29 May 2015



### Abstract

This study identifies and examines the patterns and provisions for girl choristers in eleven English cathedrals. Though some studies exist that discuss the physiological differences between boy and girl choristers and perceptions of their sounds, no study examines the structure of the choirs themselves. Significant changes had to be made to the music departments, personnel, and cultural ideas of cathedral music to make way for a separate line of choristers parallel to the traditional line of boy trebles and lay clerks.

Prior to this wave of girl choristers, cathedrals did not typically need to examine or uproot their long-held musical structures. The normal choral routine of rehearsals, evensongs, matins, and Eucharist had been in place for centuries but applied to a single line of boy choristers singing with the men. With two lines of trebles, who will direct each group, and what will they sing, and when? Is this new line a full part of the 'Cathedral Choir' or are they 'other', something slightly less-than or a fringe voluntary group?

Every cathedral had a goal in introducing a line of girl choristers, and this thesis posits that the way in which these questions, and others, were answered in each location speaks to that cathedral's goal. Furthermore, whilst establishing the secondary line of girl choristers with exact parity to the existing line of boys is admirable, it is not necessarily a misogynistic statement to accept an uneven allocation of singing duties in the cathedral. Constraints such as financial resources and the structure of the choir school play a large role, and must be factored in to the policies set in place for a new line of choristers.



## Contents

Abstract.....	3
List of Tables .....	9
Acknowledgements.....	11
Declarations .....	12
Definitions .....	15
Preface .....	17
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>1.1. Church of England Cathedrals in Context.....</b>	<b>21</b>
1.1.1. Personnel and Personalities .....	23
1.1.2. Foundations and Worshiping Life .....	24
<b>1.2. Literature Review.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>1.3. Personal Context .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>1.4. Research Approach .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>1.5. Issues of Musical Experience and Rehearsal Method.....</b>	<b>31</b>
1.5.1. Conducting .....	33
1.5.2. Music Teaching.....	34
1.5.3. Repertoire and Financial Resources .....	36
1.5.4. Age Range and Issues of Recruitment.....	37
1.5.5. Chorister Hierarchies.....	39
1.5.6. Dress Codes.....	40
1.5.7. Remunerations.....	41
1.5.8. Gender .....	42
<b>1.6. Research Process.....</b>	<b>43</b>
1.6.1. Creating the Interview .....	45
1.6.2. Evolving Interview.....	47
1.6.3. Observations.....	48
1.6.4. Analysis.....	48
1.6.5. Context of Method .....	49
<b>2. Data .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>2.1. Salisbury Cathedral (visited 6-12 April 2009; 7-12 March 2011).....</b>	<b>53</b>
2.1.1. Leadership .....	54
2.1.2. The Choir.....	55
2.1.3. Chorister Life .....	58
2.1.4. The First Girls' Line.....	59
2.1.5. Hierarchies .....	60
2.1.6. Ancient Traditions.....	61
2.1.7. Repertoire.....	62
2.1.8. Music Teaching and Learning .....	63
2.1.9. Differences in Sound .....	64
2.1.10. Social Differences.....	65
2.1.11. Initial Challenges .....	65
2.1.12. Aims for the Choir.....	66
2.1.13. Lay Clerks' Reaction .....	67
2.1.14. Issues of Recruitment.....	67

2.1.15. Audition .....	68
2.1.16. In Rehearsal .....	69
2.1.17. Conclusion .....	71
<b>2.2. York Minster (in residence October 2011 to mid-November 2011).....</b>	<b>73</b>
2.2.1. The Choir.....	74
2.2.2. The Establishment of the Girls' Line .....	76
2.2.3. The Choir Today.....	79
2.2.4. In Rehearsal .....	82
2.2.5. Repertoire and Music Learning .....	83
2.2.6. Differences in Training.....	86
2.2.7. Pre-Service Rehearsal.....	87
2.2.8. Recruitment and Audition .....	87
2.2.9. Probationers .....	88
2.2.10. Chorister Equality.....	91
2.2.11. Challenges .....	93
2.2.12. Conclusion .....	94
<b>2.3. Durham Cathedral (visited 17-19 November 2010, 28-30 November 2012) .....</b>	<b>97</b>
2.3.1. Cathedral Choir and Governance .....	98
2.3.2. The Decision to Say Yes to Women.....	99
2.3.3. Musical Leadership .....	101
2.3.4. Chorister Life .....	101
2.3.5. In Rehearsal .....	102
2.3.6. Treatment of Choristers .....	103
2.3.7. Repertoire.....	104
2.3.8. Music Teaching and Learning .....	105
2.3.9. Other Directors of the Cathedral Choir .....	106
2.3.10. Practicalities of a New Treble Line .....	107
2.3.11. Challenges .....	110
2.3.12. Chorister Hierarchies.....	110
2.3.13. Recruitment and Audition .....	111
2.3.14. Conclusion .....	112
<b>2.4. Bristol Cathedral (visited 27 Feb – 1 March 2011) .....</b>	<b>113</b>
2.4.1. The Choir.....	114
2.4.2. The Academy and the Girls .....	114
2.4.3. New Challenges.....	116
2.4.4. In Rehearsal .....	117
2.4.5. Personalities and Hierarchies.....	119
2.4.6. Conclusion .....	120
<b>2.5. Ely Cathedral (visited 24-27 April 2012) .....</b>	<b>121</b>
2.5.1. Daily Life and Structure of the Choir .....	122
2.5.2. In Rehearsal .....	123
2.5.3. Recruitment and Audition .....	125
2.5.4. Hierarchy.....	126
2.5.5. Conclusion .....	127
<b>2.6. Guildford Cathedral (visited 11-14 June 2011).....</b>	<b>129</b>
2.6.1. Recruitment and Audition .....	129
2.6.2. Hierarchy.....	131
2.6.3. Aims of the Choir .....	132

2.6.4. Music Teaching and Learning .....	132
2.6.5. Conclusion .....	134
<b>2.7. Liverpool Cathedral (visited 8-10 December 2010) .....</b>	<b>135</b>
2.7.1. The Choir.....	135
2.7.2. Apprehensions .....	136
2.7.3. Age Range and Recruitment.....	137
2.7.4. Hierarchies .....	138
2.7.5. Social and Musical Differences.....	139
2.7.6. Remunerations.....	140
2.7.7. Music Teaching and Learning .....	140
2.7.8. Parental Involvement.....	141
2.7.9. Conclusion .....	141
<b>2.8. Norwich Cathedral (visited 26-28 Feb 2013) .....</b>	<b>143</b>
2.8.1. The Choir.....	143
2.8.2. Girls' Choir Beginnings .....	144
2.8.3. Recruitment .....	145
2.8.4. Hierarchy.....	146
2.8.5. Music Teaching and Learning .....	147
2.8.6. Aims of the Choir .....	147
2.8.7. Conclusion .....	148
<b>2.9. Exeter Cathedral (visited 4-7 March 2011) .....</b>	<b>149</b>
2.9.1. History of the Girls Choir .....	149
2.9.2. Choristership.....	151
2.9.3. Music Teaching and Learning .....	152
2.9.4. Hierarchies .....	153
2.9.5. Repertoire.....	153
2.9.6. Treatment of Choristers .....	154
2.9.7. Conclusion .....	155
<b>2.10. Southwark Cathedral (visited 14-16 June 2011).....</b>	<b>157</b>
2.10.1. The Girls' Choir.....	157
2.10.2. Recruitment and Audition .....	159
2.10.3. Repertoire.....	160
2.10.4. Hierarchy.....	160
2.10.5. Different Roles.....	161
2.10.6. Dress Codes.....	161
2.10.7. Conclusion.....	162
<b>2.11. Wells Cathedral (visited 1-4 March 2011).....</b>	<b>163</b>
2.11.1. The Choir.....	164
2.11.2. History.....	165
2.11.3. Recruitment and Audition .....	166
2.11.4. Hierarchy.....	167
2.11.5. Boys and Girls .....	167
2.11.6. Repertoire and Music Learning.....	168
2.11.7. Aims .....	169
2.11.8. Conclusion.....	169
<b>3. Analysis .....</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>3.1. Whether and Why .....</b>	<b>173</b>
3.1.1. Reasons For or Against Girl Choristers .....	174



3.1.2. Yes to Girl Choristers – but why? .....	182
3.1.3 The Response of the Lay Clerks .....	184
<b>3.2. Planned Parity or Distinctiveness .....</b>	<b>187</b>
3.2.1. Chorister Hierarchies.....	187
3.2.2. Chorister School .....	190
3.2.3. Attire .....	193
3.2.4. Age Range .....	194
3.2.5. Schedules.....	196
3.2.6. Repertoire.....	197
3.2.7. Nomenclature.....	200
3.2.8. Probationers .....	202
3.2.9. Aims of the Choir .....	202
3.2.10. Remuneration .....	204
3.2.11. Unified Choir Body.....	206
3.2.12. Directors.....	207
<b>3.3 Practicalities .....</b>	<b>209</b>
3.3.1. Music Teaching and Learning .....	209
3.3.2. Attire .....	210
3.3.3. Age Range .....	211
3.3.4. Recruitment .....	212
3.3.5. Auditions.....	213
3.3.6. Treatment of Choristers .....	215
3.3.7. Directors.....	217
3.3.8. Choir School.....	218
3.3.9. Gesture .....	219
3.3.10. Parental Involvement.....	219
<b>4. Conclusions .....</b>	<b>222</b>
4.1. A Choral programme does not travel well.....	222
4.2. Practicalities can sometimes be overcome .....	223
4.3. Equality for equality's sake.....	224
4.4. Directors' modes of thinking.....	224
4.5. Custodians of the Tradition .....	225
4.6. Limitations and Further Study Opportunities .....	226
4.6. A Final Word .....	228
<b>Quick Reference Tables .....</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>241</b>
Web Sites .....	241
Books .....	243
Cathedral Publications .....	244
Articles, Essays, News, and Periodicals .....	244
Interviews.....	245

## List of Tables

Table 1: Provinces and Diocese .....	22
Table 2: Cathedral Selection.....	43
Table 3: Salisbury Services .....	54
Table 4: Salisbury Chorister Schedule, Weekdays .....	56
Table 5: Salisbury Chorister Schedule, Weekends.....	57
Table 6: Salisbury Probationer Weekends.....	57
Table 7: York Minster Directors* .....	80
Table 8: Bristol Cathedral Choral Services .....	114
Table 9: Liverpool Cathedral Chorister Schedule.....	137
Table 10: Exeter Cathedral Chorister Schedule* .....	152
Table 11: Southwark Girls Schedule .....	158
Table 12: Typical Wells Chorister Schedule .....	165
Table 13: School Years and Corresponding Ages .....	229
Table 14: Salisbury Cathedral.....	230
Table 15: York Minster .....	231
Table 16: Durham Cathedral.....	232
Table 17: Bristol Cathedral.....	233
Table 18: Ely Cathedral Girls' Choir .....	234
Table 19: Guildford Cathedral .....	235
Table 20: Liverpool Cathedral.....	236
Table 21: Norwich Cathedral Girls Choir .....	237
Table 22: Exeter Cathedral .....	238
Table 23: Southwark Cathedral.....	239
Table 24: Wells Cathedral .....	240



## Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the expert guidance of my supervisors, Professor John Harper and Dr Christopher Collins. I would also like to thank my supervisory committee, Dr Christian Leitmeir and Dr Sally Harper.

My family has been wonderfully supportive throughout this process: Laura and Dennis Smith; Allan and Nicole Mackey; my brothers David-Aidan Mackey, James Pugh, and Morgan Smith. Thank you for your wine, your gin, your chocolate, your love, and your support (emotional and financial). Thank you also to my home-away-from-home family for your love and support: Brian and Marilyn Cooke; Sophie Cooke and Daniel Bebawi; Daniel, Leanda, and MacKenzie Newlyn; and the McArthur clan.

Thank you Harry for being there with me through the ups and downs: distracting me, motivating me, leaving me alone, putting up with my tantrums and meltdowns, surrendering your laptop after mine died, and keeping my coffee topped up.

My friends have become my cheerleaders, and provided excellent service in the form of pep talks, denial of Wi-Fi access until I finish a chapter, regular requests for word count updates, and threats of retribution if my deadlines were not met. Thank you Hannah Wallace, Roxanna Klimaszeska, Anna Rose James, Cat Armitage, Stefan Roberts, Paul Edmonds, Elina Hamilton, and John Moss. Another thank you goes to my Riding Lights Theatre Company colleagues who entertained my need to vent, or politely agreed to not ask about my progress as instructed.

A debt of gratitude is owed to the directors of music, assistant directors, and cathedral staff who agreed to be interviewed or to be observed in rehearsal: Richard Shephard, Peter Moger, Jonathan Wainwright, Jeremy Fletcher, Robert Sharpe, David Pipe, Philip Moore, David Halls, Daniel Cook, James Lancelot, David Ratnanayagam, Francesca Massey, Adrian Beney, Richard Tanner, Tim Noon, Sarah Noon, Christopher Stokes, Philip Rushforth, Ian Roberts, Stephen Tanner, Andrew Millington, Mark Lee, Paul Walton, Sarah MacDonald, Oliver Hancock, Paul Trepte, Ashley Grote, Jeremy Haselock, David Poulter, Katherine Dienes-Williams, Paul Provost, Jonathan Vaughn, Matthew Owens, and Stephen Buzard.

Thank you to all of my musical teachers, conductors, and directors for the requisite knowledge to know what choir is all about: Tom Whittemore, Sun Min Lee, James Jordan, Robert Ridgell, Steve Pilkington, Robin Leaver, Joe Miller, Andrew Megill, Craig and Jane Duensing, Elizabeth Sutton, John Harper, and the Royal School of Church Music.

Last but certainly not least, I wish to dedicate this thesis to Pamela Hair, who taught me to sing.  
*Psallam spiritu et mente.*

### Definitions<sup>1</sup>

Alb - a white vestment, worn by clergy, which reaches the feet. Some choirs wear them, topped with a tabard.

Canon - a member of clergy who assist in the daily services of the cathedral. They may or may not be members of the Chapter (non-chapter canons are called minor canons)

Cantoris - the section of a church or cathedral usually located on the north side. In the choir, the cantoris (those that sit on the cantoris side) sing the lower part if a vocal line is split.

Cassock - a full-length garment worn by clergy and choristers, and other officers of the church.

Chorister - a member of a choir; in this work, the term is used to refer only to the young singers (boy and girl choristers aged eighteen or younger) who sing the treble or soprano line.

Cotta - a lightweight, loose-fitting, white vestment worn over a cassock, which reaches to the hip.

Decani - the section of a church or cathedral usually located on the south side. In the choir, the decani (those that sit on the decani side) sing the higher part if a vocal line is split.

Dumb Day - in cathedrals, the day of the week for which the normal choir is not engaged. Services may be said, or a visiting choir may sing on these days.

Eucharist - The Christian service commemorating the last supper, in which bread and wine are consecrated and consumed.

Evensong - in the Christian church, a service of evening prayers, psalms, and canticles, conducted according to a set form, especially that of the Anglican Church. It is usually choral.

Exeat - permission for absence. In cathedral choirs, an *exeat* weekend is when one group of choristers is relieved of duty whilst the other group provides music for the services.

Lay clerk - members of the choir who sing the lower voice parts. In cathedral choirs these are normally men, and in some cathedrals are called songmen or vicars choral. In this work, when making reference to the lay clerks, I also include choral scholars, who are typically with the choir on a gap year or during undergraduate studies, and who fulfil the same role as lay clerks in the choir.

---

<sup>1</sup> Para. Oxford English Dictionary

Liturgy - A form according to which public religious worship, especially Christian worship, is conducted. May also refer to the service itself that follows a specific liturgy.

Mass - a musical setting of parts of the liturgy used in the Eucharist.

Matins - a Christian service of Morning Prayer.

Precentor - a canon who administers the musical (and often liturgical) life of the cathedral. For practical purposes, the Precentor is the line manager for the Director of Music.

Quire - the section of a church building between the nave and the sanctuary. Often ordered in collegiate seating, with places for the major and minor canons specified.

Soprano - The highest singing voice, ranging from about middle C to two octaves above. In this study, the term is used to mean a mature female voice, as opposed to 'treble' to describe the same range sung by young boys and girls.

Surplice - a lightweight, loose-fitting, white vestment worn over a cassock, which reaches to the knee or calf.

Tabard - a sleeveless garment consisting of only front and back pieces with a hole for the head.

Treble - The highest singing voice, ranging from about middle C to two octaves above. In this study, the term is used to mean a young boy's or girl's voice, as opposed to 'soprano' referring to the mature woman's voice of the same tonal range.

## Preface

This thesis is arranged into four large sections: the Introduction, the Data, the Analysis, and the Conclusion.

The Introduction covers the context of cathedral choirs and structure of the Church of England and important cathedral personnel. This is followed by a brief look at existing literature pertaining to cathedral choirs and young singers with a view to establishing the context of this work. Next, I discuss my own experience in the field as a practising church musician. This is followed by the Methodology: how the research process was established, the criteria for choosing cathedrals for the study, and the process by which I analysed the data.

The Data section is arranged into chapters, one for each cathedral. There are three long sections pertaining to Salisbury Cathedral, York Minster, and Durham Cathedral, followed by shorter chapters for the other cathedrals.

The Analysis section addresses some arguments against girl choristers in the English Cathedral choirs, and examines the decisions made by cathedrals in creating their new choirs. Parity or distinctiveness between the boy and girl chorister lines can be grouped into purposefully enacted policies, or matters of practicality over which the cathedral may have had little control.

The Conclusion section summarises these findings. Several conclusions can be drawn from the research, which have implications on the future of girl chorister programmes in cathedrals.





## 1. Introduction



### 1.1. Church of England Cathedrals in Context

It is important to address the structure of the church before discussions of cathedral choirs occur. The decision-making bodies and how they are structured do have an impact on the way a choral programme in a cathedral can operate.

At the highest level, the Church of England is represented by the reigning monarch of the United Kingdom.<sup>2</sup> She is the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, and her role includes appointing (at the recommendation of the prime minister) archbishops to oversee provinces, bishops to oversee diocese, and Deans to oversee cathedrals which are at the heart of each diocese.<sup>3</sup>

Legislative matters for the entirety of the Church of England including matters of doctrine, finance, relationships with other religions, and matters of religious or public interest are decided by General Synod. This body is comprised of several major parts: the House of Bishops, House of Clergy, House of Laity, in addition to the Presidents (the Archbishops of Canterbury and York) and the Staff (Secretary general, clerks, legal advisors and counsel).<sup>4</sup>

The Church of England has two main provinces, Canterbury and York, covering the southern diocese and the northern ones, respectively.<sup>5</sup> The Diocese are as follows:

---

<sup>2</sup> Archbishops Council, 'The Structure of the Church of England', <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure.aspx> (accessed 1 Dec 2014).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Archbishops Council, 'About the General Synod', <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/general-synod.aspx> (accessed 1 Dec 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Archbishops Council, 'Diocese Map', <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/dioceses.aspx> (accessed 1 Dec 2014).

Table 1: Provinces and Diocese

Province of Canterbury	Province of York
Derby	Carlisle
Lincoln	Sodor & Man
Leicester	Newcastle
Birmingham	West Yorkshire & the Dales*
Coventry	York
Peterborough	Blackburn
Ely	Liverpool
Norwich	Southwell & Nottingham
Chelmsford	Manchester
Southwark	Chester
Rochester	Sheffield
Lichfield	Durham
London	
Winchester	
Salisbury	
Truro	
Bristol	
Hereford	
Worcester	
Gloucester	
Portsmouth	
Exeter	
Bath & Wells	
Chichester	
Guildford	
St Alban's	
St Edmundsbury & Ipswich	

\*The diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales was created in 2014, combining Ripon & Leeds, Wakefield, and Bradford diocese.<sup>6</sup>

Each diocese has a representative cathedral, from *cathedra* referring to the chair of the Bishop of the diocese. Whilst the bishop is the head of the diocese, within the cathedral itself, leadership

---

<sup>6</sup> Archbishops Council, 'Diocese Map', <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/dioceses.aspx> (accessed 1 Dec 2014).

rests with the Dean and Chapter regarding the day-to-day life inside the cathedral.<sup>7</sup> (Indeed, tradition dictates the Bishop must gain permission to enter the cathedral of his diocese, and that permission must be granted by the cathedral's Dean. This may occur in the form of a ceremony in which the Bishop raps on the door of the cathedral with his shepherd's staff and waits for the door to be opened to him).

The Chapter of a cathedral is comprised of four primary dignitaries, in order of rank: the Dean, The Precentor, the Chancellor and the Treasurer, historically seated on the four corners in the quire.<sup>8</sup> The Dean is the head of the cathedral church, in essence, the provost. The Precentor is typically in charge of musical offerings of the cathedral. The Chancellor oversees the cathedral's schools and lections within the service. The Treasurer has oversight of the cathedral's fabrics, furniture, and ornaments.<sup>9</sup>

The chapter may also include other canons such as a sub-Dean, succentor, chamberlain, and missionary. Each cathedral will have a slightly different role assigned to the canons in the chapter based on the current needs and concerns of that particular building and its work. In every cathedral included in this study, the Precentor had charge of the music and liturgy used in worship. He or she fills the role of 'line-manager' to the Director of Music, who in turn is the line-manager for the choir.

### 1.1.1. Personnel and Personalities

An important aspect to factor in to the leadership of a cathedral is personality dynamics. In one cathedral, the hierarchy of leadership may be quite rigid: a director of music will be required to gain approval from the Precentor for every piece of music he or she plans. The Precentor may utilise a more hands-on approach to leadership and management. Not necessarily indicative of distrust in the Director's choices, it is simply a different dynamic stemming from the personality traits of the Precentor and the director, as well as the working environment set by the Dean.

---

<sup>7</sup> The Association of English Cathedrals, 'Cathedral and Bishop', <http://www.englishcathedrals.co.uk/cathedrals/about-cathedrals/cathedral-and-bishop/> (accessed 1 Dec 2014).

<sup>8</sup> The Association of English Cathedrals, 'How is it Administered?', <http://www.englishcathedrals.co.uk/cathedrals/about-cathedrals/how-is-it-administered/> (accessed 1 Dec 2014).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

In another cathedral, the leadership structures may be a bit more relaxed and trusting. The Precentor may have a good working and friendly relationship with the director, and may only scan the repertoire plans and approve them, trusting that the director has is like-minded in liturgical sensitivities, utility of time and resources, as well as thorough knowledge of the repertoire on hand as well as knowledge of sources for new repertoire to incorporate.

### 1.1.2. Foundations and Worshipping Life

Cathedrals are grouped into several categories based on their historical purpose. Those of the Old Foundation were served by seculars, that is, by priests who owned land and lived outside of the cathedral.<sup>10</sup> These include Chichester, Exeter, Hereford, Lichfield, Lincoln, St Paul's, Salisbury, Wells, and York. The New Foundation were cathedrals which, prior to the dissolution of the monasteries, were served by monks. These include Canterbury, Durham, Ely, Norwich, Rochester, Winchester, Worcester (all Benedictine order) and Carlisle (Augustinian order).<sup>11</sup> The latter were cathedral-priorities: the abbot was the bishop, and his seat was the cathedra in that church. Other cathedrals of the New Foundation include Chester, Bristol, Gloucester, Oxford, and Peterborough, which were monastic but reformed as secular cathedrals after the dissolution.<sup>12</sup>

A further class of cathedrals exists, called the Modern Foundation. These are churches which have been recently (in the past century or two) elevated to cathedral status, such as Newcastle, and Chelmsford which were parish churches. St Albans and Southwark were monastic churches, and Ripon and Southwell Minster were collegiate churches. Liverpool and Guildford, both built in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, are of the Modern Foundation.

There is a strong historical link in the services at cathedrals today. Both monastic and secular cathedrals in the middle ages held services of the hours. Nine regular offices were sung or said: matins in the middle of the night, lauds at daybreak, prime at 6am, terce, sext, none every three hours, with High mass in-between terce and sext, vespers was said in the late afternoon, followed by compline before retiring to sleep. Other services such as a Mass of the Virgin, or

---

<sup>10</sup> G.H. Cook, *The English Cathedral through the Centuries* (London: Phoenix House, 1957), p.13.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p.14

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p.14

prayers for travellers, would have taken place in the Lady Chapel and other altars around the cathedral. Some cathedrals had dozens of altars around the building, making the cathedral a conglomeration of little chapels; many services could have been held simultaneously under one roof.<sup>13</sup> On Sundays and other festivals, the High Mass and processions would break the routine.<sup>14</sup>

Today, cathedrals are major tourist draws and hold a ceremonial role as the Mother Church of their diocese. But each cathedral is first and foremost a house of worship with a regular rotation of services. Some of these may include choral offerings of the choir or other instrumentalists, and some may be spoken.

Whilst every cathedral will have a slightly different schedule during the week, a typical week will usually include:

- Weekday morning worship (may be prayers or Eucharist)
- Weekday noon service (may be prayers or Eucharist)
- Weekday evening prayers (may be spoken or choral)
- Sunday Eucharist
- Sunday Matins
- Sunday Evensong

The detailed schedule of services in each cathedral may vary considerably from place to place.

## 1.2. Literature Review

This study pertains to the structure of the choir itself - how did the choristers featured in these studies get to be choristers and what is it they do in their daily life? How did their role come to be, and how does it compare to the role of the boy choristers - or are their roles comparable within the cathedral?

Although some studies and published works exist pertaining to English choristers and looking at the differences between boy and girl choristers, these studies tend to focus on the

---

<sup>13</sup> G.H. Cook, *The English Cathedral through the Centuries* (London: Phoenix House, 1957), p.29.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

physiological aspect of the gendered voice. Some cathedral choir directors in this study share opinions on the physiological differences between boys' and girls' voices at different ages, but this was not the focus of the study, nor are any conclusions drawn in this thesis relating to subjective preferences. I outline here some of the studies which delve into the topic.

Issues such as puberty and voice change, including statistical data gathered by electrolyngograph to collect data on vocal tone and wavelength at different notes in a chorister's range are discussed in some detail by Graham Welch and David Howard - see 'Gendered Voice in the Cathedral Choir'<sup>15</sup> and 'Female Chorister Voice Development'.<sup>16</sup> Graham Welch's 'Culture and gender in a cathedral music context'<sup>17</sup> also pertains to this matter. Jenevora Williams' thesis on the implications of intensive singing training on the vocal health and development of boy choristers in an English cathedral choir expounds on the topic and focuses on the boy choristers specifically.<sup>18</sup> One may also read more about the boy treble's voice in Martin Ashley's book, *How high should boys sing?*, which is a thorough resource.<sup>19</sup>

For a study on perceptions of the girls' tone and boys' tone in English cathedral choirs, see David Howard and John Szymanski's 'Listener perception of girls and boys in an English cathedral choir'<sup>20</sup> which utilised two CDs of choristers from Wells Cathedral Choir, and tasked listeners to guess whether boys or girls were singing the top lines. This article delves into the subjective listener's hypotheses and utilises scientific data to understand what precisely about a chorister's tone might lead a listener to believe it is one gender rather than the other.

---

<sup>15</sup> Howard, D. and Graham Welch, 'Gendered Voice in the Cathedral Choir', *Psychology of Music*, 2002  
<http://pom.sagepub.com/content/30/1/102.refs.html>

<sup>16</sup> Howard, D. and Graham Welch, 'Female Chorister Voice Development: a Longitudinal Study at Wells, UK', *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, Spring & Summer 2002  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40319142>

<sup>17</sup> Welch, G., 'Culture and Gender in a Cathedral Music Context', in M. Barratt (ed.) *A Cultural Psychology of Music Education* (New York: Oxford University Press).

<sup>18</sup> Williams, Jenevora, 'The implications of intensive singing training on the vocal health and development of boy choristers in an English cathedral choir', (Institute of Education, University of London, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Ashley, M., *How High Should Boys Sing?: Gender, authenticity and credibility in the young male voice* (Farnham, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Howard, D. and John E Szymanski, 'Listener perception of girls and boy in an English cathedral choir', *Proceedings of 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition, Keele University* (2000)  
<http://www.escom.org/proceedings/ICMPC2000/Sun/Howard.htm> (accessed 10 May 2015).



For context of cathedral choristers, and the history of singing in cathedrals, one can refer to Alan Mould's *The English Chorister*.<sup>21</sup> Over two or three pages he details the beginnings of the girls' choir at Salisbury and some general information about choristers today, mostly focusing on changes that have occurred in cathedral choirs over the centuries. Margaret Barratt looks at the life of today's choristers in 'On Being and Becoming a Cathedral Chorister'<sup>22</sup> from a psychological perspective, but again, this work glosses over the provisions made for the choristers in the first place.

### 1.3. Personal Context

My observations of rehearsals, and the interview questions I ask directors, are based on my experiences as a practicing musician. My perspective is informed by my background in churches and in a secular university setting in various roles including: as a young chorister, a classically trained vocalist, a paid church singer, a professional choral singer, and a trained choral conductor prior to embarking on this academic course. These experiences in music allow me to perceive aspects of a choir's operation that are unique to their circumstances, and determine patterns amongst choral programmes that reveal the function, resources and goals of the choir. As such, it is important in the context of this thesis to explain my choral background.

I was introduced to the choral world at the age of six in the children's choir of St Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in Columbia South Carolina, a family parish church, and was a member of that choir from autumn 1993 to May 2005. This choir, under the direction of Mrs Pamela Hair, consisted of children whose families attended the church. If a new chorister joined the ranks it was probably due to their family joining the church community, as opposed to a targeted choir recruitment effort. The choir rehearsed on a Wednesday for one and a half hours in the evening, and sang one Eucharist service per month. The approximately twenty choristers, between the ages of six and eighteen, came to the choir from a wide variety of schools and from different musical backgrounds, brought together by the church rather than the musical tradition.

---

<sup>21</sup> Mould, A., *The English Chorister: A History* (London: Hambleton Continuum, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> Barratt, M., 'On being and becoming a cathedral chorister: A cultural psychology account of the acquisition of early musical expertise', in M. Barratt (ed.) *A Cultural Psychology of Music Education* (New York: Oxford University Press).

The choir sang treble-only repertoire, of one to three parts: simple one-part anthems in the common Anglican repertoire taken from *Anthems for Choirs* volumes and similar series found in many Anglican parishes. As the common musical skills level was 'novice' music was teachable, and used in rehearsals to learn music theory and aural skills.

There was an opportunity through this choir to attend summer courses with the Royal School of Church Music in America, which gave attendees the chance to sing evensong repertoire and SATB English cathedral repertoire with English cathedral directors. The fast pace in these summer courses – repertoire learned in the day was performed daily in Evensong and in Eucharist and Evensong services at the end of the week when polished – was dissimilar to my home experience at St Michael's church choir, which would work through the same amount of repertoire in two or three months.

During this time, I also began taking voice lessons through the Palmetto Centre for the Arts Vocal Programme in my public (state) High School (August 2001 – May 2005). This programme admitted students from 9<sup>th</sup> grade (aged fourteen) by audition to experience private vocal tuition, to work on solo repertoire and to practise vocal technique from the basics of breathing and posture to the more complex issues of vibrato, intonation, and range flexibility.

For my undergraduate degree, I attended Westminster Choir College in Princeton New Jersey, a four-year, accredited college that provides a conservatoire-style musical environment and performance-based undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and I was enrolled here from August 2005 to December 2008. Entrance is by application and audition. All students who receive a place are required to attend an hour-long choir rehearsal four times per week to prepare for three or four concerts per year. In the third and fourth year, students automatically become a part of the Symphonic Choir, directed by Dr Joe Miller. This choir was the in-residence choral body for major international orchestras and performed symphonic works in New York, Philadelphia, and further afield. To receive an offer to study at Westminster Choir College requires a proficient level of sight-reading and working knowledge of music theory, as well as technical skill at voice and/or piano and organ.

The Westminster Choir College experience was aimed at cultivating well-rounded musicians. Modules were grouped into music theory, music history, specialised instrument, and practical skills. In the Sacred Music degree, modules on choral repertoire, practicalities of leading a choir in a church environment, sacred music history, psalm conducting, biblical context of music in worship, and children's choir training were required.

In addition, the general requirements of music theory and history were common to all undergraduates at Westminster Choir College, and I had the opportunity to examine the musical language of Bach's works for solo violin and cello, nineteenth-century symphony, the history of Faustian legend set to music, and the style of English Art song of the twentieth century.

Apart from general requirements and degree-specific content, students would study their chosen instrument: voice, organ or piano. All students have an hour-long lesson with their primary instrument instructor. Voice students, like myself, had an additional hour-long coaching lesson with their accompanist/coach. The coaching served as an opportunity to work through the techniques learned in lessons, and apply the techniques to the repertoire. Students were expected to practice at least one hour each day, or more, as decided by one's voice teacher and coach.

During my undergraduate studies, I was also a member of Trinity Princeton Episcopal Church's paid choir from August 2005 to December 2008, returning in August 2009 for a further year. Directed by Mr Tom Whittemore, the choir rehearsed for two hours on a Thursday to prepare for a service of Eucharist every Sunday, as well as one evensong and one compline service per month. The choir was SATB, the soprano line supplied by young people from age eight to eighteen of both genders (though mostly girls). The lower lines consisted of trained singers who gained place in that choir by audition. All singers in this choir were paid by levels: section leaders, main choir, teens, and juniors.

In the spring of 2009, I embarked on a study abroad semester to Bangor University in Wales to work with Professor John Harper. During this semester, I completed a short study of cathedrals and produced a report of 10,000 words. The study included Salisbury, Ely, Liverpool

Metropolitan, Liverpool Cathedral, Chester, and Wells. The scope was much smaller, mainly looking at training differences between boy and girl choristers. It was this small project that inspired the idea behind this thesis. In the study abroad project, it became apparent to me that the training of the choristers at present is only one small part of the story of girl choristers, and every cathedral integrated the girls slightly differently. In order to understand the place that the girls hold today, a larger study was needed which examines the history and how the cathedral choirs evolved to include this new line of trebles.

All of these experiences coloured my approach to research and observation, and informed my project planning. The knowledge gained from a history of music-making in a variety of roles guided my methodology: I knew what aspects to look for when differentiating one choir from another, what aspects of a rehearsal were standard choral routine (and what a change of routine looks like), and what aspects stood out as unique features of a particular choir.

#### **1.4. Research Approach**

My research approach has been primarily in two parts: observations of rehearsals and services, and interviews with the director of the choir as well as other influential figures in the life of the choir. Using my wide range of experiences in choral music I determined factors that reveal the pillars of a choir's function: the level of musicianship in the choir and the time and resources available. I was able to determine these two main tenets based on observation of the proportion of rehearsal time to performance time, the pace of the rehearsal, the choral director's gesture, the method of music teaching, and the selection and frequency of repertoire.

The level of musicianship and the time and resources allotted to the choir are crucial to any choir's existence. The way in which a cathedral choir integrates girl choristers hinges on these factors as much as in any choir. Once the basis of a choral programme's circumstances are determined, other aspects can be taken into account, such as the age range and school recruitment, statistics of gender proportions in the choir, the hierarchy amongst choristers, the physical appearance or dress code of the choir, the familiarity of the director with the choir, the differences in treatment of boys and girls, and remunerations for singers. These components can also be compared and contrasted in order to determine patterns and outliers.

### 1.5. Issues of Musical Experience and Rehearsal Method

The musicianship of a choir is here defined as its level of knowledge of music theory. At higher levels, musicianship includes aspects of technique, including vocal technique and stylistic choices in the production of sound. This knowledge and skill of connecting the visual notes on the page with how they sound aurally, singing intervals, recognising and understanding key signatures and how time signatures affect what one sings has a great impact on the choir as a whole. Singers build on these basic skills in order to create powerful, emotional, and musical performances, adding nuance and complexity with dynamics and phrasing.

If the base level of musicianship is very low the repertoire must be simpler, and it is this kind of repertoire that is ideal to use as a teaching tool. It would be futile to expect a choir to jump immediately into difficult repertoire and a rigorous schedule of performance before basic theory skills are acquired. Without these skills, the practice is part classroom and part rehearsal room, which is how rehearsals at St Michael's were run. Gradually singers who stayed in the choir for a longer time, or gained additional outside musical experience, could raise the average level of musicianship in the group.

Musicianship skills are an important resource, and I have experienced a range of choirs with different base level musicianship skills. If the majority of the group is proficient at sight-reading, and the remaining singers are learning the basics but lack confidence, the group will probably be able to get through a considerable amount of music. In Trinity Choir Princeton, this was the case, and over my five years in Princeton, the choir's reputation as a place to sharpen one's skills and become a better musician made it a sought-after choral group. In this environment, the learners gained confidence to lead on more and more difficult repertoire, and those who were already proficient had the opportunity through performance to add musical finesse to their sight-reading.

The basic musicianship skills were not taught at Trinity Princeton, however. Singers needed to be able to sight-read to a certain degree to gain entrance to the paid choir. At Westminster Choir College, in contrast to St Michael's and Trinity, all singers were proficient at sight-reading, and rehearsals were for perfecting repertoire.

In a choir such as St Michael's in South Carolina, there were approximately five hours of rehearsal time, spread over one month, to prepare one psalm in plainchant or simple Anglican chant, a relatively simple trebles-only anthem of no more than three parts, and a hymn that most singers would already know by rote. A great deal of time was used in rehearsal for talking and explaining. Teaching and learning the basics of music reading - using the anthem and psalm as a teaching tool, as well as Royal School of Church Music workbooks and activities - often dominated the rehearsal. Rehearsal might start late or take some time to come to order, and there were frequent periods when choristers would lose focus and talk amongst themselves.

Whilst it may seem that this is not necessarily a rehearsal, it communicates an important detail, that of the goals and function of the choir. This choir primarily functioned to introduce young people to a love of music, based on the mission statement of the Royal School of Church Music: 'I will sing with the Spirit and the Understanding also'. To love music, and sing it in the spirit of worship, requires an understanding of the music. Allowing children the opportunity to learn and understand music was a high priority, and the proportion of rehearsal time to performance time gave ample space for learning and enjoyment in the context of this parish church.

The proportion of rehearsal time to performance time informs the necessary pace of a rehearsal. St Michael's clearly took a leisurely rehearsal pace. In the interest of encouraging a genuine appreciation of choral music for novice singers, a breakneck pace was easily avoided by allowing several weeks for learning music. A choir such as Westminster Choir College had a large amount of time to use. The approximately 200-voice strong choir attended hour-long rehearsals four days a week. No intensive theory teaching was necessary, and the group would work on perhaps two or three works in a two-month span.

Although it would seem that the excess time would leave room for the singers in this group to disengage with the rehearsal proceedings, the professional nature of the choir prohibited this. If the director was working with one voice part on a passage, every other voice part was expected to follow along, because critiques directed at one section were to be applied to corresponding passages in other voice parts. If that voice part moved ahead by two pages in the score before

the director cued another part, it would be unacceptable for anyone in the room to be unaware of the entrance point.

The time allotment allowed for flawless performance to a rigid standard. The choir's director, Dr Joe Miller, received performance notes from the orchestra's maestro, including tempo, dynamics, stress and technique details, and would relay these precisely to the choir. This was the purpose of the choir, and that crucial resource of time indicated the professionalism and the high expectations for the end product. Trinity Princeton's choir, in contrast, did not have one minute to spare in rehearsals, as a lot of music had to be covered in a very short amount of time. The choir had two hours a week to rehearse music for Eucharist every Sunday and a monthly Evensong, as well as working ahead for future bigger events that did not have a dedicated rehearsal time. Rehearsals started precisely on time and there were very few periods when any singer would not be actively engaged in the piece of music. Trinity Princeton's rehearsal pace was quicker by default; every minute of rehearsal was accounted for on a schedule posted on the notice board before rehearsal. Enough time was given for each music item to be addressed, but in a two-hour rehearsal in which ten different pieces are scheduled, not one minute can be spared for chat, disengagement or loss of focus.

This choir had a primary function of leading the weekly worship of a parish church. Unlike St Michael's where an adult choir provided musical leadership to a service for weeks when the children were not engaged, Trinity incorporated the young singers into the main choir. The congregation also prioritised music in the service. Some crucial elements of the Eucharistic service were indeed sung by the choir, not by the congregation, linking the choir strongly into the act of worship for that congregation, and the choir was highly respected for that function and appreciated by that community.

### **1.5.1. Conducting**

The conducting gesture of a director can speak to the goals of the choir. A simplistic approach to conducting – very basic conducting pattern, mirrored hands, only simple cues and dynamics given gesturally – may indicate the group is in a more novice stage. This type of gesture caters to the lowest level of musical comprehension and runs the risk of holding back more advanced

singers eager to improve their musicianship at a faster pace. As in the choir of St Michael's, where reading the notes is a more pressing goal than performing a unique and complex interpretation, the rehearsal will probably include a verbal run-through of stylistic choices of the director and things to be aware of when singing the piece.

Another style is a studied gesture: all cues and interpretations from the score are gestured and practised; throughout a piece this may span a range of grandiose and subtle movements, and from performance to performance the exact routine is unlikely to change. Westminster Choir College's director Joe Miller utilized such a gesture. A choir that responds well to a studied gesture will probably be highly skilled and understand how every gesture translates to the production of sound.

By contrast, the diagnostic approach to conducting is a fluid style that may not have a distinct or consistent pattern. The director is constantly listening to the choir and adjusting his gesture as he diagnoses and corrects problems. These rehearsals probably run quickly; perhaps there is no time for verbal critique and explanations. A proficient level of musicianship is required to sight-read and follow quickly, and the group must respond with precision as a cohesive unit to the changes in gesture. As under Tom Whittimore's conducting style at Trinity Choir in Princeton, a piece may not be performed exactly the same way twice.

### **1.5.2. Music Teaching**

There are various methods of teaching music; one can use a studied or methodical approach based on the piece at hand, or teach first the concepts needed to grasp the piece and then apply them to the music. If the musicianship skills are of a certain level, the director can just open up the piece and leave the choir to sight-read. Using that method, the director can start at the beginning of the piece, or work backwards or forwards in sections, or sight read the most difficult sections first and work through them and finish with the easier pieces. By observing a teaching session, one can discern an idea of the musicianship of the group as well as the time available for teaching and learning.



At St Michael's, music teaching was meticulously worked through. Music theory that applied to the piece became a fun quiz-style question and answer section, with choristers desperately raising hands to answer the questions first. Sing the first interval, name the key signature, name the time signature, explain the time signature, name the note on beat two of the third bar; questions appropriate to age and skill level were directed at various choristers or given to the whole group to compete for the first answer.

When the time came to bring the knowledge together, Pam Hair would usually play the melody along with the choristers, and sometimes sing along. Mistakes usually brought the process to a halt at first, although moving along to fix problems later was encouraged.

The process was acutely different from music teaching at Trinity, which was largely non-existent. New pieces were opened and sight-read through from start to finish. If there was a particularly difficult section somewhere in the piece, that passage might be sight-read first, simply to point out what about it might be difficult. Tom Whittemore would play the accompaniment along with the singers, offering only as much help to the melody as the accompaniment dictated.

At Trinity Princeton as well as St Michael's in Columbia, if singers make a careless mistake in the course of reading through music, and later whilst rehearsing it after the notes are learnt, they are expected to raise their hand for a moment. This signals to the director and singers around that it was a mistake and not a misunderstanding of what that note should have been. Additionally, if the same mistake was made twice by the same singer it was the responsibility of the singer to take the music home, or stay after in rehearsal to relearn that section to the mistake did not take anyone else's time.

Miller's direction at Westminster Choir College was similar. In the interest of professionalism, he lectured on the importance of this practice of self-teaching if he suspected the singers had forgotten their responsibility to come fully prepared for rehearsal. Indeed in the syllabus for the choir term this was laid out as a singer's responsibility, that all singers know what the music for the next day's rehearsal will be, and therefore should come to rehearsal with notes learned. If

sight-reading was not strong for any particular singer, it was their responsibility to match the pace of the group by whatever means necessary.

### **1.5.3. Repertoire and Financial Resources**

The important issue of what the choir will sing is linked with the financial resources of the choir, as well the level of musicianship, the time allotted for music learning, and also how often the choir is engaged to perform.

A director must take into account other factors as well, including the vocal quality of the group; for example, younger singers' voices may lend themselves to a certain body of repertoire whilst more mature voices may seem out of place. As my choral experience has been with mixed gender choirs at St Michael's, Trinity and Westminster Choir College, the concept of repertoire chosen for one gender or another was not taken into account, but does exist in some circumstances with which I was familiar through my coursework, including three semesters of Practicing Church Musician in the course of my undergraduate studies, which taught me various methods of repertoire selection and things to be aware of when choosing repertoire for the choir.

Some choral repertoire is more difficult for novice choirs; a piece of music with difficult rhythms, a particularly wide vocal range, more than two or three voice parts, or jarring or clashing tonality might not be appropriate for a choir such as St Michael's. Trinity Princeton, being slightly more advanced, may be able to handle one or two of those features in a piece of repertoire, but may need to dedicate a bit more rehearsal time to that piece for several weeks running up to that service. Westminster Choir College, by contrast, frequently performed repertoire of this level, as there was ample rehearsal time to perfect the most difficult pieces.

Closely related to the selection of repertoire is the frequency with which a piece of music may be repeated. In a church choir, a director must take into account that a choir and a congregation will indeed notice when the same piece is used several times within a short time period. In a community parish church, such as St Michael's and Trinity, this is an important consideration.

St Michael's children's choir sang only once per month, and also lacked financial resource for an extensive music library. The total library primarily consisted of two long shelves in the rehearsal room, mostly books of compiled anthems. The choir in my time utilised approximately 50 anthems, which was appropriate for the performance engagement and resources. Choristers who stayed in the choir long enough would probably repeat an anthem several times over the course of four or five years, which provided a core group of singers who knew and could probably remember the piece the next time it was scheduled, aiding in the music learning stage.

Trinity Princeton's music library was vast, and even with only around half of it in regular circulation there were few repeats in music selection. The music cupboards and shelves occupied every wall, nook and cranny of Ivy Hall, a separate building dedicated to the music department of Trinity Princeton. There were up to fifty copies of every piece of music, book, and hymnal, ranging from Eucharist repertoire and services to Evensong services and even some matins selections though matins was not regularly celebrated.

For Westminster Choir College, however, repertoire frequency was not controlled by the director, nor was the congregation a matter to take into consideration. The choir was contracted for a choral work with a certain orchestra in a certain venue. If the work is repeated within several months or even years, as occurred in my time with Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 2, it was the result of a different orchestra in a different location who coincidentally schedules the piece in a similar time frame.

#### **1.5.4. Age Range and Issues of Recruitment**

Depending on the make up of the choir, and the resources of time and musicianship available, the age span of a choir can inform an observer about the circumstances of the choir, and speak to the function and goals of that group.

In a choir such as St Michael's, the large age span of eight to eighteen, with the training choir as a separate group from age six that feeds into the main choir, is indicative of the time and

financial resources of the church, as well as its composition. To separate the age spans in that context would require time and funds that were unavailable, possibly additional staff, as well as time constraints on parents who may have a child in each age bracket.

Additionally, the lack of choir recruitment at St Michael's would have posed a problem. As the singers in that choir were children of families that would ordinarily attend the church service on a Sunday anyway, there was no effort towards recruitment besides the occasional word of mouth or 'bring a friend' trial session.

Like St Michael's, Trinity Princeton also lacked major recruitment efforts. Despite the relative wealth of Princeton residents who made up the congregation, the budget was rather small. Singers came to the choir for its reputation, and in order to keep the best singers in the choir, the choice between paying the singers and funding recruitment for new singers left major recruitment efforts abandoned.

Trinity did maintain a very large age span of singers, perpetuated by its reputation and by the small music community in Princeton. The younger choristers were drawn by their families to the church, and committed to the choir for the musical opportunities as well as the close friend groups fostered there. The older singers were drawn from local musicians, most from Westminster Choir College, desiring the challenge of honing their sight-reading and musical leadership skills.

As mentioned previously, both St Michael's and Trinity recruited choristers from the congregation already present in the church, and certainly many churches do use this method due to limited funds. In the course of my undergraduate studies, I have become familiar with another method: recruitment via schools. This method applies to choral programmes that perhaps do not maintain a regular congregation.

A director could approach this task in several ways. He or she might send literature to schools, to be dispersed to parents of musically gifted children. The director might have the opportunity to visit music classes in local schools personally and talk about the experience of singing in a church choir in an effort to spark the interest of a child wanting more musical opportunities

than the school provides. Issues of the school's visitor policy must apply and in some cases it may be better to make contact with the local music teachers and ask them to mention the church choir route potentially gifted young singers.

Westminster Choir College of course needed none of these options, and their choir recruitment was one of the main draws of recruitment to the college. International recruitment visits were common, and the touring choirs publicised the opportunities present at the college. High school musicians around the country and even around the world had the opportunity to hear the touring choirs and strive to be a part of them.

In a church choir, such as St Michael's and Trinity where recruitment was through the congregation, singers came from a range of schools. To some extent, this affected the social dynamic of the group. Running parallel to the musical aspect was the promise of seeing friends from other schools. They may have little opportunity in the school day to associate with this group of people that understands a niche passion for choral music, and to be able to experience a shared passion every week with like-minded young people is a strong draw. My experience as a chorister and this same feeling of sharing a common identity, which I didn't share with school friends, gives me an insight to this side effect of school range.

#### **1.5.5. Chorister Hierarchies**

Based on my experience both as a chorister climbing the ranks of a defined hierarchy - and indeed being at the top of the hierarchy for three years - as well as observing the young people's status levels at Trinity Princeton as a member of the choir but outside of the ranks, and as a member of a professional level choir with no hierarchy, I have experienced first hand how a choir operates and what is indicated by the hierarchy.

In some cases a hierarchy is a boon to the smooth running of the whole choir. At Trinity Princeton the head chorister and deputy head chorister were not only examples to the group in musicianship, but were also the social centre of the young people in the choir, and seeing to inclusiveness and pastoral needs often fell to them, whether it was an explicit role charged to them is unknown. The head choristership was a prized spot and something to aspire to.

Whittemore could focus on the rest of the choir knowing that the pastoral needs of the younger ones were in good hands.

As a chorister growing up, the choir had a very distinct set of levels, visible by distinctive dress code, discussed shortly. The training choir (probationers), junior choristers, and senior choristers were grouped partly by school year and partly by Royal School of Church Music achievement levels. There was a head chorister, and in a year when the head chorister was preparing to leave the choir, there would be a co-head chorister to prepare the next year. There were no fixed term limits for head choristership, and though I benefitted from that particular aspect with a three-year term, I can see in hindsight that it may have been more beneficial to give other choristers a chance at that level of leadership. The job consisted of assisting younger choristers, occasionally even taking a small group to help learn a passage, singing many of the solos when they arrived, and in one year a duet with my co-head chorister in our Nine Lessons and Carols service during Advent.

#### **1.5.6. Dress Codes**

Although it may seem superficial, in the course of my observations I have learned to read the aesthetic differences in the choir. As a result of my personal experiences, I can see how choosing different vestments for a different group sets them apart.

In St Michael's as a chorister, the girls wore black vestments while the boys wore red. In the context, this difference may have been to promote commitment to the choir - the red cassocks were seen as 'cooler', and superior to boring black vestments. There was another distinction in that the training choir wore a red bow in their cotta, which served no purpose but to set them apart as a cherubic or 'cute' part of the choir. This aspect visually set that group apart as less important musically, and more of a show, although the training choir year was vitally important in learning basic skills necessary for the future years in the choir.

Many church choirs, including Trinity Princeton, use all the same robes, in Trinity's case a blue cassock and knee-length white surplice. Probationers - choristers in their first year - would not wear the surplice until a ceremony during a church service in which they would officially be

made a full member of the choir and earn their surplice. Black flat rubber soled shoes were necessary so as not to call attention to yourself within the group, creating a visual of a unified choir, all of its members anonymous.

At Westminster, concert attire aesthetics set you apart by rank which choir you were in, but once within a certain choir, there were no distinctions. First years wore a red robe over black concert attire. Second, third, and fourth years and postgraduates were fitted in concert dresses and tuxedos for the gentlemen. Second year choir would adorn the dress with a gold 'S' pin, and the elite auditioned choir wore pearls. Hair had to be worn completely off of the face with no exceptions. Makeup and other details of attire were carefully regulated under the stipulation that no attention should be called to you personally, all understated.

### **1.5.7. Remunerations**

In a church choir setting, the payment of singers can be controversial, and I have personally experienced both a volunteer choir setting and a paid choir setting. St Michael's was a volunteer choir for several reasons. The budget for that choir was minimal, like many parish choirs in the community. Singers in that choir were members of the parish with their families; there was no concerted effort at recruitment, and no need to incentivise the choir. The main purpose was to promote the love of music for the purpose of worship.

Trinity Princeton paid all of the singers in the Harmony Choir, including teens and children. This solidified commitment levels for a choir that had no budget for recruitment drives per se, but needed a small incentive to support a word of mouth recruitment method.

Westminster Choir College was not a sacred setting, and indeed singers paid for the opportunity to sing in that choir as part of their tuition fee. The experience of singing in a choir with Grammy awards in its history, with world-renowned symphony orchestras on stages with international reputations was incentive enough. Nevertheless, commitment was controlled by term marks, only two absences were permitted in the course of a semester, and final marks were directly affected for each additional absence or any wavering in rehearsal participation.

### 1.5.8. Gender

The question of gender in a children's choir, and the very concept that one gender may be barred from singing in a church, did not occur to me until I had been at St Michael's for several years. In 1997, the Washington National Cathedral began a line of girl choristers, parallel and equal to the line of boy choristers. The issue of the RSCM quarterly magazine, the front cover of a girl chorister with two long braids and wearing a ruff, singing in the National Cathedral stayed on the piano in the choir room at St Michael's for several years; it was seen as a moment of triumph for music, for women, and for the church.

I had experienced a single-gender choir in the context of summer courses through the RSCM knowing very well that my older brother attended RSCM summer courses for only boys: equal opportunities. The Cathedral in Columbia, South Carolina had a young singers' choir with girls and boys, and there were girls and boys in my choir at St Michael's. Later on at Trinity there were boys and girls in the choir, with an added element that the boys could go through their voice change and remain in the choir, singing as tenors and basses.

There are of course different methods of including both girls and boys into the choral life of a church. Like at St Michael's and at Trinity, they could be singing in the same choir together, or as in my RSCM summer camp experience, they can sing separately and parallel to each other. Issues of a child's intellectual development and whether the two genders should be separated, and in what contexts that may be beneficial have been researched in the past few decades, with varying conclusions, which are not the remit of this thesis.

In any integration method there are factors to consider, such as whether the boys and girls will be treated equally. Is one group more 'coddled' than the other, are the groups held to the same expectations? Are there behavioural differences between boys and girls, whether in a mixed group or in separate groups? Do they learn and react in the same way? My experience shows me that boys and girls have different temperaments at the same young age which most choristers start singing, approximately age 8 through 12, and in puberty there are further changes, and those differences evolve.



## 1.6. Research Process

The institutions identified were for specific purposes, likewise the interview subjects were chosen for the knowledge they could convey and their role in the cathedral's life. Some background information provided by the cathedrals' respective websites provided insight as to which cathedrals would be interesting to include in the study. This information is briefly set out in Table 2.

**Table 2: Cathedral Selection**

Ely	two lines of choristers sponsored by different entities (girl choristers are of the school rather than the cathedral)
Salisbury	innovator for separate and parallel line of girl choristers
Durham	most recently established line in the Salisbury model; very quick transition from novice choristers to full parity.
York	gradually worked up to exact parity for girl and boys choristers; major restructuring of programme and personnel, now like Salisbury model.
Exeter	choir school; two lines of choristers very separate, different directors
Bristol	choir school is a government-funded academy
Wells	considerable change in chorister programme, complete restructuring saved girls' line from demise due to financial issues
Guildford	choir school for boys, not for girls.
Liverpool	cathedral with no choir school, urban environment; one director for girls and boys; boys are the primary choir.
Southwark	cathedral with no choir school, urban environment; only option in London for girls to sing in a cathedral setting; two very different choirs with different directors.
Norwich	choir school for boys, co-educational but no choristership offered for the girls; recent restructuring brought girl choristers closer to the cathedral choir where they were previously a diocesan choir.

I chose three cathedrals for extended study based on initial enquiry into their choral programme. These are Salisbury, Durham, and York. Salisbury Cathedral was the first to integrate girl choristers into their existing choral programme as a parallel and equal line with the boys. York went through a gradual restructuring of their choral programme centred largely on the personnel and shifting hierarchical structures. Durham Cathedral waited 25 years to begin a line of girl choristers from the first instance in Salisbury, and once they began that line, they worked efficiently and methodically with a solid plan and goal of exact equality of boy and

girl choristers from the outset. They share the resulting choral structure of exactly equal lines of girl and boy choristers, with the same director training both lines. They share a common means to that end: that the impetus for creating exact equality came from the cathedral's leadership rather than any outside mandate (eg Bristol Cathedral's academy regulations required the parallel lines to share responsibilities equally). They share a choir school, though with different boarding requirements. They share similar environments as prominent historical landmarks in their towns; Durham and York are closely related in that they also benefit from nearby universities.

York was chosen for an extended period of research due largely to practicalities. It is located on a main rail line allowing easy access to other cathedrals for collection of data. The university library and Minster library provided ample information and resources. The personnel most closely involved in the decision-making process that facilitated the restructuring of the choir were still located in York and available to interview to gain different perspectives.

Durham and Salisbury were chosen for more in depth studies but I chose to revisit them rather than to immerse in their communities for an extended period.

Some cathedrals that I visited were left out of the thesis, namely Blackburn, Chester, and Liverpool Metropolitan. Blackburn Cathedral's girl choristers sing very rarely, usually fortnightly or once per month, and whilst I was able to visit on one occasion to observe a rehearsal and a service, considerably more time would be needed in order to gain the same amount of information as the other cathedrals. I visited Chester Cathedral before I obtained an appropriate recording device, and so was unable to transcribe an interview or revisit the audio recording from a rehearsal. Planning a revisit proved difficult for clashing diaries. Whilst enough information was gathered to create a chapter for Chester, the lack of interview transcription and audio of rehearsal would have resulted in unbalanced work. I visited Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, and whilst plenty of information was gathered on that visit, it is a Catholic Cathedral. The services they sing, the repertoire they learn, and the rotation of repertoire is very different to the Anglican schematic, and it was best to leave Liverpool Metropolitan out of the thesis for that reason.

Not all cathedrals that support and train a line of girl choristers were visited in this study, nor were interviews sought out. They include Lincoln, Leicester, Birmingham, Coventry, St Alban's, Chelmsford, and others. Some would have provided a unique view of infrastructure changes, and may have made good additions to this study, but a cut-off point had to be set due to time constraints and thesis length limitations. That cut-off point was set at eight smaller chapters and three larger chapters.

It is important for the reader to note that I do not include a full listing of statistics of how many cathedrals in the UK currently have girl choristers. This statistic is always in flux, and requires a more complex answer than 'yes' or 'no'. In any year, a cathedral may add in girl choristers, it may be on a trial basis, or they may promote a voluntary line to be equal to the boy chorister ranks. Perhaps they have only a voluntary group of girls, and should that group be counted as a line of girl choristers, to be compared with Durham, York, or Salisbury? There is such variation between the choral programmes that a simple list could not do justice to the complexities involved.

### **1.6.1. Creating the Interview**

Based on my previous choral experiences from several perspectives, I had an idea of the specific aspects of a choral programme to observe. Interview questions were crafted to collect this data, beginning with the specific facts and figures: number of girl choristers and boy choristers, age ranges of each, numbers of rehearsals and services per week and the general weekly schedule. These questions can sometimes be answered from a cathedral's website, but asking the director in the interview may clear up out-dated website information, or even give new information about the choral programme in its current state and the challenges it faces. For example if there are notionally 18 places for choristers, but of these, 4 are probationers, or perhaps the full team of choristers is not in place for another reason (e.g. low audition turn out, changed voices).

The next phase of interview questions was focused on recruitment and audition and the process they use, with room to allow the director to comment on its success or what they wish to see happen in the future. Regarding the audition process, I asked the directors to describe what they are looking for in a chorister or what would specifically make a chorister not receive a

place. This speaks to the vision the director may hold about their ideal choir: would they reject a prospective chorister based on musical achievement, energy and vivacity, tonal quality? The question was open-ended to allow for candid thoughts about auditions.

The next group of questions pertained to the choristers and their role in the choir, in the cathedral, and in the community. This includes hierarchy, expectations, and excellence or negligence in fulfilling those expectations. From my previous choral experiences, I knew that some choirs are geared toward external perceptions: they record, tour, and concertise to raise the public awareness of the choir or church. Other choirs may focus on outreach in their community through the medium of music. Still other choirs might focus on the day-to-day music making in their own home church. This is largely the decision of the leadership in the church, combined with the director's goals for the choir.

In those cathedrals with very new girl chorister programmes (those with room for the girls to take on more responsibility to match the boys' duties), I asked about the goals of the director. This question gave room for the director to speak about how the girls gradually folded in - or how along in that process they were, and what may be next as far as musicality or big events are concerned.

The interview then moved on to the musical aspect - repertoire and music learning. Typically, I would ask the director about how they would assign a new piece of music - what about the piece would make the director think it was more suited to the boys or to the girls, or if he considered that aspect at all. Then, once assigned, how would that piece be taught to the choristers. This is the section of the interview that had the most varied responses. The choice of repertoire is so subjective, as I found, and that question had to be kept vague and open-ended so as to let the director consider the process. In some cases, the directors had never really analysed why a piece would go to the boys or to the girls, there was perhaps some subconscious method.

I would then return to some basics of the choral programme - the history of choristership at the cathedral, parental involvement, and economic incentives for choristers. If the director was involved in the set up for the girls' choir, I would continue on to enquire about the history there: the impetus behind the decision, the supporters or detractors, concerns and challenges in

the early days. If the director did not know very much about that process, I directed those questions, if possible, to a previous director or a member of clergy.

### **1.6.2. Evolving Interview**

The interview process itself changed over the course of the research based on my findings and my conversations with the directors. The changes were caused primarily by the realisation that the directors themselves do not consider their job in an academic way. Some of their opinions and thoughts about their work and the choir are not even fully formed, and the answers to formal questions were not packaged neatly in a paragraph before we sat down. In many cases, the directors would think out loud and come to a conclusion (about goals, or repertoire, or any of the questions) by a circuitous route.

The interview needed to be flexible to allow for the directors to feel comfortable and reflect on their own lives and work in ways they may not have previously done. They would never need to write an essay on any of these aspects or turn inwards to consider them in their normal lives. The interview became more like a guided conversation than a formal interview, and this allowed me to discover more about the choir itself. In a certain cathedral, I might not have guessed that the repertoire lists were so meticulously curated, and a question specifically worded 'how do you go about assigning a piece of repertoire to either the boys or the girls' may not even apply, may not have an answer at all, or may be so intrinsically connected to something unrelated to the repertoire lists that the director does not realise that he ever assigns repertoire when he actually does. He or she may need to talk through the whole process, and I realised rather early on that it was necessary to give this space and flexibility.

Throughout the data collection process, I needed to be sensitive to the directors, and follow their thought processes rather than my own hypotheses. This resulted, for some interviews, in mixing the order of the questions, or eliminating or adding in questions based on my background research and observations. I often observed a rehearsal or a service before the interview so that I could prepare adequately and respond to the choir I saw and heard, rather than a fictitious portrait or idealised mould of a cathedral choir based on my own preconceived notions.

### 1.6.3. Observations

A key part of the research process was the observation of rehearsals and services. In order to get a broad view of the work of the choir, I attempted to observe several services and rehearsals, including those with the boy choristers or by other directors. I stayed close enough to the group to see and hear the rehearsal, but did not call attention to my presence or contribute in any way beyond the director's initial introduction.

Due to the practicalities of the cathedrals' schedules and my own time limitations, I was unable to observe the same proportion of girls to boys' services and rehearsals in each cathedral, nor was I always able to observe all combinations of *director : choristers* as far as training and rehearsing. In most, but not all, cathedrals, I was able to observe a music teaching and learning rehearsal.

During rehearsals, I would observe proceedings and usually utilise an audio recording device as a memory aid to revisit them. I would note the rehearsal procedure, how the session was called to order, the gestural methods used by the director during the rehearsal and if these were any different during the service. I would observe the lay clerks and their dynamic with the choristers and the director, how the director would fix mistakes (often different with the girls than with the boys) and the pace of the rehearsal itself.

In those cathedrals with choir schools, there would normally be rehearsals in the morning as well as the afternoon, so patterns could be observed as to the content of the morning versus the afternoon rehearsals. In those cathedrals without a morning rehearsal, the schedule of when they rehearse and the content of that rehearsal is all the more pressurised; on the whole those cathedrals have significantly less rehearsal time.

### 1.6.4. Analysis

During the data collection process, some patterns came to light and connections could be made between the cathedrals. I examined each aspect that I had observed and discovered in interviews. When beginning analysis, I would revisit the audio recordings, interview transcripts, and notes taken during rehearsals.

As the aim of this research was primarily to observe and record the current status of girl chorister programmes in some English cathedrals and distinguish the patterns and provisions for them, the analysis of the data is geared inward. I looked at the programmes themselves, how and why they came to be, and the patterns I could find between each of the cathedrals.

Certain parts of the analysis process can be classed as technical, interpretive, or procedural, and these elements must be taken in context.

- The technical: those things that are related to musical method - for example the teaching and learning of music
- The interpretive: those things that related to performance practise and stylistic preferences - where these exist, every effort was made to quote the opinion directly and avoid asserting my own stylistic preferences as a practising musician.
- The procedural: those things which are done in cathedrals, in choirs, in the music department or the staff team at each location.

Identifying some of these (especially the dynamic of the staff team or perceptions from the congregation) would require significant immersion in the community, which was not usually possible. But those procedural analyses relating to musical method, choirs, and specifically cathedral choirs are within my realm of experience, as discussed previously.

#### **1.6.5. Context of Method**

It is important to note that this thesis should be kept in context: that is, of a practicing musician undertaking applied research. The research is primarily empirical, the majority of the data is collected first hand by observation of rehearsals and services and interviews with the musicians themselves. Analysis is by qualitative means. Although some statistics and numerical data are factored in (e.g. chorister ages, numbers of choristers, distribution of services for boys and for girls), that data is better analysed in a qualitative light: why the choristers are of those age ranges, why there are so many choristers, and the rationale behind the distribution of service duties.





## 2. Data



## 2.1. Salisbury Cathedral (visited 6-12 April 2009; 7-12 March 2011)

Salisbury Cathedral is widely regarded as the pioneer cathedral for girl choristers in England. In 1991, they became the first to set up a distinct line of girl choristers under director Richard Seal, parallel to the existing boys line, as a part of the Cathedral Choir and included in the Cathedral's Charter.

The Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Salisbury is regarded for its architecture, the nave taking only 38 years to complete in the 13th century, and possessing the tallest spire in the United Kingdom. Building work begun in 1220 started in a meadow only a mile from the original cathedral Old Sarum, which had been the centre of the diocese since 1092. It is the only medieval cathedral to have been built on virgin soil.<sup>23</sup>

It is also home to the best preserved of the four remaining copies of the original Magna Carta. It has the largest cloister and close in Britain, and the world's oldest working clock. The granite for the construction of the building was quarried eleven miles from the site, and weathers to a slightly green colour on the exterior. The interior utilises Purbeck marble, which shines with a slightly green hue, and throws a dark contrast to the light coloured stone.<sup>24</sup> The full effect when the sun comes through the windows is a bright teal light; the robes that the choir wears were custom-made to the same colour, as if the choir and the building are inextricable from each other.

In addition to its numerous tourism draws, the cathedral is a house of worship, as it has been for centuries. Morning worship with communion is held every weekday, as is Choral Evensong. A noon Eucharist service is held every Tuesday and Thursday. There are three choral services on Sunday: Matins, Eucharist, and Evensong. The choir is strongly linked with the daily life of the Cathedral's worship, made strongly apparent through a lack of a dumb day here.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> J. Harvey, *Cathedrals of England and Wales* (London: Batsford, 1974).

<sup>24</sup> Salisbury Cathedral, 'A New Start: Building the Cathedral', <http://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/history/new-start-building-cathedral> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Salisbury Cathedral, 'Regular Service Times' <http://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/worship-music-services/regular-service-times> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

**Table 3: Salisbury Services<sup>26</sup>**

Monday to Saturday		Sunday	
7:30am	Holy Communion	8:00am	Holy Communion
12:00pm	Holy Communion (Tues and Thurs)	9:15am	Matins
		10:30am	Eucharist with Sermon
5:30pm	Choral Evensong	4:30pm	Choral Evensong

### 2.1.1. Leadership

At the helm of Salisbury Cathedral is Dean June Osborne. Appointed in 2004, she has presided over Salisbury Cathedral's governing body as a progressive and committed leader. She was one of the first women to be ordained in England in 1994; the previous year she gave a speech at General Synod in favour of women's ordination, which *The Times* described as 'swinging the synod in favour of women's ordination'.<sup>27</sup> She was the first woman Dean of any cathedral in the Church of England. Currently, she is one of the group of only eight ordained women being considered for bishop's orders when women are permitted to be elected.<sup>28</sup>

Canon Precentor Jeremy Davies also has a significant role at Salisbury Cathedral. As Precentor, he leads the Worship and Liturgy of the Cathedral, and is responsible for the planning of services and music at the Cathedral, with the Director of Music. (In 2012, this role was taken over by Tom Clammer when Davies retired from his post).<sup>29</sup>

In addition to the Dean and Precentor, the cathedral, like all cathedrals in the Church of England, is led by the Chapter. The Canon Chancellor Reverend Edward Probert and the Canon Treasurer Reverend Sarah Mullally fill other prominent roles. The Reverend Canon

<sup>26</sup> Salisbury Cathedral, 'Regular Service Times' <http://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/worship-music-services/regular-service-times> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

<sup>27</sup> C. Dodd, 'Interview: Superior Mother', *The Times*, 14 Feb 2004 <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/health/article1787310.ece>.

<sup>28</sup> R. Gledhill, 'Women clergy to be made temporary 'bishops' by Church of England', *The Times*, 7 Feb 2013 <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/faith/article3681671.ece>.

<sup>29</sup> Salisbury Cathedral, 'The Cathedral Choir', <http://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/worship-music-choirs/cathedral-choir> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

Thomas Woodhouse, and Lay canons Eugenie Turton, and Luke March complete the governance body of the cathedral.<sup>30</sup>

The Chapter informs the College of Canons and the Cathedral Council on matters integral to the life and worship of the cathedral.<sup>31</sup> These two bodies meet twice per year to discuss matters of mission and purpose, decide on the budget of the cathedral and assure that the chapter's guidance is in line with the cathedral charter and statutes.

### 2.1.2. The Choir

The choir's Director of Music, David Halls has been at Salisbury since 1985, first as Assistant Director of Music under Richard Seal until 1997, then under Simon Lole, until 2005 when Halls took the helm as Director of Music. Until 2011, Assistant Director of Music Daniel Cook co-directed the choir with Halls. Cook is now Sub-Organist at Westminster Abbey; John Challenger is the Assistant Director at Salisbury.

The boys and girls rehearse every morning and afternoon, the group singing Evensong for that day is with the Director for both rehearsals, and the Assistant takes the other group.

The boys and girls are auditioned between the ages of seven and nine for the choir, and notionally enter in year four and stay until the end of year eight.<sup>32</sup> There are four places for each year for a total of sixteen choristers to complete each team. They all attend Salisbury Cathedral Choir School, in the Bishop's Palace within the Cathedral Close. Some are boarding, some are day students, and some are part-boarding (in residence for some of the week and home for some of the week).

The choir consists of sixteen boy and girl choristers, with four probationers for each team, as well as six songmen. The songmen sing one choral service per week without the choristers; the choristers sing one choral service per week without the men. If there is any inequality of boys

---

<sup>30</sup> Salisbury Cathedral, 'The Cathedral Chapter', <http://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/about-us/cathedral-chapter> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> See Quick Reference Table on ages and school years in the Appendix

and girls services (due to a special service outside of the normal rota) this will even out over a term; Halls takes great care to count each service sung by the two teams of choristers and keep them equal.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, the boys and girls keep an equal schedule with extra choral opportunities such as recordings, tours, and BBC broadcasts. The tendency is not to combine for these activities, but rather alternate boys and girls.

For Salisbury Cathedral choristers and parents, all regulations, schedules, information, and policies are outlined in *The Chorister Handbook*. Written by David Halls early in his tenure at the cathedral, this guide to chorister life is considerably more detailed than many similar materials at other cathedrals. It is a quintessential tome; no arguments are raised against it, and Halls can refer to the Handbook in the event of any miscommunication where the choristers are concerned. There is no excuse for ignorance of the rules: they are laid out plainly in this book.

The Chorister Handbook outlines the schedules for probationers and choristers separately. For Full choristers:

**Table 4: Salisbury Chorister Schedule, Weekdays**

WEEK DAYS	Boy Choristers		Girl Choristers	
	ARRIVE	REH/SERVICE	ARRIVE	REH/SERVICE
Monday	7:50am	8:00-9:00 (M)	7:50am 4:20pm	8:00-9:00 (R) 4:30-6:20 (R)
Tuesday	7:50am 4:20pm	8:00-9:00 (R) 4:30-6:20 (R)	7:50am	8:00-9:00 (M)
Wednesday			7:50am 4:20pm	8:00-9:00 (R) 4:30-6:20 (R)
Thursday	7:50am 4:20pm	8:00-9:00 (R) 4:30-6:20 (R)		

R: meet in school reception, to go over to the cathedral song room

M: meet in the school music room<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Halls, David. Interviewed by the author. 10 March 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Halls, D., 'Salisbury Cathedral Chorister Handbook', 2011.

For the weekend, the duties are as follows:

**Table 5: Salisbury Chorister Schedule, Weekends**

WEEKEND	Duty Choir A		Duty Choir B	
	ARRIVE	REH/SERVICE	ARRIVE	REH/SERVICE
Friday	7:50am 4:20pm	8:00-9:00 (R) 4:30-6:45 (R)	7:50am	8:00-9:00 (M)
Saturday	7:50am	8:00-9:00 (M)	7:50am 4:20pm	8:00-9:00 (R) 4:30-6:20 (R)
Sunday	8:25am	8:30-11:45 (R)	2:25pm	2:30-4:00 (R)

The probationers join with all weekday rehearsals and services (although they do not sing in the services until a certain point in the year when they gradually start to ‘sing-in’). On weekends, their schedule is slightly different:

**Table 6: Salisbury Probationer Weekends**

WEEKEND	Boy Probationers		Girl Probationers	
	ARRIVE	REH/SERVICE	ARRIVE	REH/SERVICE
Friday	7:50am	8:00-9:00 (R)	7:50am	8:00-9:00 (M)
Saturday	7:50am	8:00-10:30 (Team A or B)	7:50am	8:00-10:30 (Team A or B)

Twice per term there are Exeat Weekends, during which the boys or the girls are off duty for Friday, Saturday and Sunday and the other team sings all of the services. For that weekend, the probationers are not required, only the full choristers, and the duty choir is required to board at the school for Friday and Saturday evening.<sup>35</sup>

Full choristers on duty are also required to board for the duration of Christmas and Easter services, as well as the week of the Southern Cathedrals Festival. They sing daily during these times; whilst there are no school lessons and the non-choristers are home, the choristers are timetabled for instrument practice, as well as fun day trips and activities. These ‘Chori-Hols’ are

---

<sup>35</sup> Halls, D., ‘Salisbury Cathedral Chorister Handbook’, 2011.

well loved by all the choristers, and seen as a special privilege and bonding experience with their choir colleagues.<sup>36</sup>

### 2.1.3. Chorister Life

The choristers of Salisbury Cathedral lead a regimented life which, while focused in many ways on the choir, assures that the children have other interests and activities to keep them grounded and happy.

The choristers who board at the cathedral begin their day at 7am with a wake up call and breakfast. By 7:50, they don their cloaks and process in their ranks to their rehearsal for the morning, boys and girls alike. Morning rehearsal spans from 8 am to 9am, and then their school day starts with all the regular lessons taught at any primary school.<sup>37</sup>

Most of the choir school learns an instrument, including those who attend the school but are not choristers.<sup>38</sup> The choristers generally learn two instruments, though only one is required.<sup>39</sup> Musical lessons are scattered throughout the day for private instruction or in small groups.

After lunch and the afternoon's lessons, there is a tea break and after school clubs. All students belong to a house (Arundells, Braybrooke, Kings, and Wren, named after houses within the close).<sup>40</sup> The choristers, along with their non-chorister peers, participate in sport, art groups, inter-house competitions and quizzes, and other such activities, until 4:20 when they report to rehearsal for the 5:30 evensong.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> *The Choristers of Salisbury Cathedral* dir. David Halls. Performed by Salisbury Cathedral Choir (DVD) 2010.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Halls, David. Interviewed by the author. 10 March 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Salisbury Cathedral, 'The Choristers of Salisbury Cathedral' (Leaflet) 2010

<sup>41</sup> *The Choristers of Salisbury Cathedral* dir. David Halls. Performed by Salisbury Cathedral Choir (DVD) 2010.



Evensong typically lasts about an hour, and choristers have a half hour until prep when they are to do their assignments for school. Junior students have prep from 7-7:30 whilst seniors have a full hour until 8pm.<sup>42</sup>

#### 2.1.4. The First Girls' Line

The girl choristers were introduced at Salisbury Cathedral in 1991, after a yearlong process spurred by then-Director of Music, Richard Seal. In 1989, Seal attended a meeting of the Choral Foundations Working Party at Church House in Westminster. At one point in the meeting, something mentioned off-hand 'one of these days were going to have to think about the girls'. It was not an item on the agenda of that meeting, but Seal considered it on the hour-and-a-half train journey from Waterloo to Salisbury.<sup>43</sup>

When he returned home he began working immediately to set about establishing a line of girl choristers parallel to the boys. The idea of exact equality had not yet been considered, just the first step of giving girls the opportunity to sing as the boys had done for centuries was a big enough first step.<sup>44</sup>

It was for exactly that reason that Seal decided to pursue this task. He considered the experience of choristership – his own experience as a chorister at New College, Oxford, had so fundamentally changed his life. As Alan Mould writes in *The English Chorister*, 'What moved Richard Seal so deeply was the realisation that the opportunity of choristership, with its riches of liturgical and musical experience and its uniquely formative education, was utterly closed to half the country's children, simply because they happened to be born female'.<sup>45</sup>

The girl choristers began their life as a part of the Salisbury Cathedral Choir in August of 1991 with no funds or scholarships available to them. Over 30 girls auditioned and 16 were chosen. They started to sing with the men on Mondays, then alone on Wednesday, which was formerly

---

<sup>42</sup> *The Choristers of Salisbury Cathedral* dir. David Halls. Performed by Salisbury Cathedral Choir (DVD) 2010.

<sup>43</sup> A. Mould, *The English Chorister: A History* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

the Cathedral's dumb day, and take on one of the Sunday services.<sup>46</sup> The boys still bore the majority of the service responsibilities, thereby still earning their generous scholarships. Gradually the girls were able to take on an equal share of the services, and as of 2006 the two lines are equal in scholarship as well.<sup>47</sup>

### 2.1.5. Hierarchies

Each team of choristers has two head choristers called Dean's and Precentor's Choristers, both in year 8, with the other year 8s acting as senior choristers. (In the boys' line, they are called the Bishop's Chorister and Vestry Monitor).<sup>48</sup> For both the boys and girls leaders, medallions are awarded in a special commissioning service towards the beginning of an academic year. At this same service, probationers from the previous year are given their surplice and initiated into the choir (see 2.1.6). Each line also has a Turner, one or two choristers with some responsibilities in the upkeep of the music library.<sup>49</sup>

The head choristers are chosen for a range of leadership abilities, some musical and some social. At the time of research, the Dean's Chorister in the girls line was the best musician all around, and the Director of Music, David Halls, knew years in advance that girl would make the best head chorister.<sup>50</sup> The Precentor's Chorister was a good musician, not the best singer, but was very well liked and a leader in sport at school, and pastoral to the younger choristers.

As for the other two year 8 girls, one was the best singer in the group but didn't show leadership or passion for music; she lacked a certain spark and the director couldn't be certain that she was really processing the music or indeed interested in it. The other wasn't a particularly good musician and could not be relied upon to show musical or social leadership to the younger girls with the required level of consistency.

---

<sup>46</sup> A. Mould, *The English Chorister: A History* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007).

<sup>47</sup> Salisbury Cathedral, 'The Cathedral Choir', <http://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/worship-music-choirs/cathedral-choir> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

<sup>48</sup> Halls, D., 'Salisbury Cathedral Chorister Handbook', 2011.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Unless otherwise indicated, the information in the remainder of this chapter and direct quotations from the director, are derived from my interview with David Halls.*

The two leaders in each group play a very important role; the director can call upon the head chorister to gather the other choristers, line them up, keep them quiet, or help a younger chorister find her place in the music. On tour in Italy in one year, Halls arranged the choristers on the stage as he wanted them, called his head choristers, pointed out where they would process from and said 'I've no idea how you're going to get from there to there... I'll give you ten minutes to sort it out how to get onto the stage like that' and they did.

David Halls is very aware that the system of head choristers is not so ubiquitous in cathedrals today as it once was. The Choir School was inspected by OFSTED and the only slightly negative comment was the choir hierarchy system, but Halls decided to continue it. As he puts it: 'you'd get a hierarchy anyway because you have different ages, you've got a hierarchy physically of course, some are very big, some are very small, why can't you have someone who's sort of my lieutenant?... I use them; I give them training for life because they have to learn to take on responsibility. We all do, like in the army, and it's all over society. It's there and somebody has to lead. It's good for children to be in control of other children.'

#### **2.1.6. Ancient Traditions**

Salisbury Cathedral choir's initiation ceremony for newly 'made-up' choristers has been recorded over many centuries in a unique ceremony called 'bumping'. For the boys, the new choristers are taken by the head and deputy head chorister, held by the head and one by one they bump the head of the new chorister – lightly – onto a stone in the quire aisle, worn down by many centuries of bumping (and probably some sanding down by a kind stonemason). The choristers proclaim 'I bump you a chorister of Salisbury Cathedral according to the ancient tradition' with one head bump on each stressed syllable. The ceremony is witnessed by all the choristers, probationers, families and extended families.<sup>51</sup>

For the girls, a similar ceremony takes place. New girl choristers are taken to the Trinity Chapel and 'bumped' in the same way with a large Bible. Several girls are then awarded with Benefactors' medals, to commemorate the original founders of the girls' line.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Halls, D., 'Salisbury Cathedral Chorister Handbook', 2011.

<sup>52</sup> Halls, D., 'Salisbury Cathedral Chorister Handbook', 2011.

Another tradition is that of the boy bishops. The Boy Bishop ceremony was common in most cathedrals prior to Henry VIII's reign.<sup>53</sup> During a weekend service close to St Nicolas Day on 6 December, the Bishop's Chorister is enthroned as the Boy Bishop, symbolic of the biblical precedent of the humble attaining righteousness. He gets to sit on the Bishop's seat, wear a replica of the Bishop's regalia, give a sermon which he will have written himself, and bless the congregation.<sup>54</sup>

For the girls' line, a similar ceremony involving the Dean's Chorister takes place at a Marian Procession in May. Harking to the dedication of the cathedral to the Blessed Virgin Mary, a procession, lead by the Dean, winds through the cathedral with several stations along the nave, under the spire, and through the Trinity Chapel.<sup>55</sup> The Dean's Chorister delivers a sermon that she will have written herself.<sup>56</sup>

#### 2.1.7. Repertoire

The boy and girl choristers have almost entirely separate repertoire lists. Even some of the greatest choral works are divided, which Halls thinks is a pity in some cases that one group misses the opportunity to sing a certain anthem or Mass, but on the whole, the opportunities to sing English Cathedral classics are equal between the two groups. One group sings Howells' Collegium Regale canticles; the other sings Howells' St Paul's canticles. One group sings Mathias' Jesus service, the other sing Leighton's Magdalene College service. Girls sing Byrd in 4; boys sing Byrd in 5.

The only real difference is in the treble-only repertoire. The men do not sing on a Wednesday, and the girls always sing alone on that day. As a result, they have an extensive repertoire of treble-only pieces, whereas the boys have only four or five, just in case scheduling difficulties result in their singing on a Wednesday.

---

<sup>53</sup> A. Mould, *The English Chorister: A History* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007).

<sup>54</sup> Halls, D., 'Salisbury Cathedral Chorister Handbook', 2011.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *The Choristers of Salisbury Cathedral* dir. David Halls. Performed by Salisbury Cathedral Choir (DVD) 2010.

Halls chooses repertoire based on the strengths of the choirs at the time. At the time of research, the girls were very keen readers for more modern music – light and rhythmic, with complex counting and possibly more difficult key signatures or accidentals. As a general pattern, the girls at Salisbury approach music in an academic fashion, they read and analyse a piece quickly, and are generally brighter than the boys in terms of internalising how they should approach singing a piece. The boys, as the director describes them, ‘do a bit of soul, good tunes, robust singing’; a different approach than the girls in general. Of course these are not hard and fast rules; they do not preclude the girls from singing a more tuneful piece or the boys from singing a rhythmic or modern piece.

### **2.1.8. Music Teaching and Learning**

Once a piece has been chosen for one group or another, for whatever reason, the process of teaching to each group is only different in terms of his dynamic with that group and the different approaches each group takes to the music, described above. With both groups, Halls might give them a new piece and take on an ‘enthusier’ role. He’ll say: ‘c’mon boys, this is a great piece that we need to keep in our repertoire. Just look ahead, what’s the text all about’, then carry on with small bits of the piece. His method for larger pieces is ‘a little bit, often’; by this method the boys learnt the St John Passion in a very short amount a time.

The girls generally read faster, and can sweep through a piece of music. A particularly difficult Mathias piece took only five days for the girls to learn, when a similar style would take the boys two weeks. Halls has noticed this as a pattern over the years, but still gives ample time to both teams to learn a piece. The first day might cover two or three small sections of the piece, perhaps a line or two. Then the next day will go over that part to gain confidence to learn the connecting page between those two sections, and carrying on in that fashion until the notes are fairly confident.

For solos, Halls goes by his Chorister Handbook. Created for the benefit of choir parents to explain ‘everything about everything’, he explains in the handbook that he gives solos based on how he wants them done, and he does not need to justify it, and that is simply the policy. He

starts with the year 8 choristers and shares solos around that group. For the year 7s he begins to give them small solos to built confidence.

Halls takes into account the choristers' strength when choosing solos, however. At time of research, the head chorister, as he says, could have done every solo that year and it would have been perfect, but that would be unfair. He gave a solo to another year 8 girl who was not very confident and generally an introverted person; she didn't enjoy the experience and didn't want another solo again.

In another year in the boys' line, one of the senior choristers who was a very good musician and singer absolutely did not want any solos, and his mother asked the director to not give him any. Although it takes away an important leadership opportunity for the senior boy, in Halls' words: I object to that actually because he's a senior boy. On the other hand I'm not in the business of making a kid's life miserable.' The last time the boy was given a solo, he was away ill on that day. That boy found his niche in small group singing with a semi-chorus of two or three boys, and can be a great leader in that environment.

### **2.1.9. Differences in Sound**

The director has extensive philosophies on the differences, vocally and socially, between boys and girls of this age group, which come from his experience in the choir since 1985, as well as raising children of his own.

At Salisbury Cathedral, the sound of the two groups is, generally, the same. In some years the boys might have a different sound from the girls, but in his observation, that occurrence coincides with particularly big personalities dominating a group at the time. As a rule his philosophy is:

'On the one hand you've got a group of 20 little girls and 20 little boys. ...what's going on here [voice] and here [head] are the same in this age group, more or less. There isn't a big difference between the larynx of a little girl and a little boy. Certainly here you've got the same people training both choirs. So I'm treating the girls and the boys, vocally, the same. So we've got same equipment, same people, same space. I think that's important, they're singing in the same space generally. Singing with the same organ, same song room, same music room, all the same. So therefore you take that logic and think: is it a great surprise

that they sound more or less the same? On the other side of the argument is if you went today to hear Winchester boys sing, tomorrow Chichester boys, and Sunday my boys, these are all boys of the same age, will they all sound the same? No! Why they don't doesn't matter. They'll sound different because the choir director wants different things or the space is different, all sorts of things. They will sound different. So someone says 'do your boys sound different from the girls?' I'm saying, on the one hand sometimes, on the other hand, sometimes not. It's nothing I do; I just do what I do!

#### **2.1.10. Social Differences**

The director shares a different dynamic with the girl choristers and the boy choristers, and this is due to the patterns he has noticed in sensitivities. Halls says his sense of humour is taken differently in the two groups. With the boys he can be a little blunter; they take criticism better than the girls here. If he says something slightly rude to a boy, he will just think it's funny and get the underlying message. If Halls says something a little rude to a girl she may get upset and tell her parents.

Of course they are all children and both the boys and girls can be sensitive about things. In one year there was a chorister who had recently lost a parent, another whose mother was in the hospital, another whose parents were divorcing. In some cases Halls has noticed that a chorister, especially a boarding one, can be somewhat protected within the choir; the cathedral and the life of a chorister can add an element of stability that some slightly more sensitive children might need.

#### **2.1.11. Initial Challenges**

Although today the girls and boys receive 30% of their tuition fees as scholarship, it was not so in the earlier days for the girls at Salisbury. At the start, the girls only sang two services per week, and indeed the remunerations reflected the lighter workload of the girls.

The initial worries when starting the girls' line were many, and included musical ability. In 1991, no one really knew what to expect from the girl choristers, no one had tried in this way to bring in an independent line of girls. Halls recounts, 'Will these kids be able to sing a song within a year? Of course they could, but nobody really knew. Will they be able to get some sort

of repertoire, will they have five *Mag* and *Nuncs* within the first term or will they have to sing the first one five times? You just didn't know. Now looking back of course we were probably cautious.'

Halls says he remembers having a feeling that the girls would be fine, that they were probably brighter than the boys at that age. But then another worry was whether the congregation would boycott listening to the girls. The service and music listing at the time noted which team was singing Evensong on the day. Many people did voice opinions but on the whole that fear did not come to pass. When Halls took his post as Director of Music, he eliminated the practise of labelling which team was singing; now there is no indication until the choristers appear.

Another concern was protecting the tradition of boys singing, which the director happily states has not been negatively impacted, at least not at Salisbury. According to Halls, what the naysayers didn't take into account the number of siblings: at the start the girl choristers might have been siblings of the previous boy choristers, but over time the girl choristers became the example and it was the younger brothers being drawn into the choir by older sisters already singing. In Halls words: 'It's not surprising; it's just a fact that if you've got a musical child, chances are the others are. Just genetics isn't it?'

#### **2.1.12. Aims for the Choir**

David Halls makes goals not for one group or the other, but for the choir as whole. He says that when he leaves his post, he wants people to notice that the choir has moved on, or advanced or just generally sounds better than it did before he took it on.

As far as the added elements are concerned, tours and recordings, those are good goals to accomplish, and Salisbury's choir does them. But in the financial climate, improving in their day-to-day task of making music in the Cathedral is not such a bad thing. 'I think, although I don't like to stand still, that just standing still is not bad actually, at the moment. That's where I'm starting them. I'm in a period of consolidation, people are losing their jobs around me in this office even, and I am still able to appoint 16 choristers and 4 probationers and 6 decent men and an organ scholar. I'm just trying to do the best with what I've got'.



Working within one's financial means, events such as BBC broadcasts can do a lot to raise the profile of the Cathedral, and also keep that reputation current rather than relying on a recording which may no longer reflect the choir in a few years' time.

#### **2.1.13. Lay Clerks' Reaction**

Throughout the process of including the girls' line, the lay clerks have been nothing but supportive. Halls attributes this partly to their relationship to Richard Seal; by Halls' account the clerks adored Seal, if he asked them, they would go along with any plan he put forth. The Dean and Chapter also set an example of support from the first day; the lay clerks simply follow the example that the whole of the cathedral's community has set.

Of course it doesn't affect them in any real sense, they sing the same amount of repertoire they always have, and still have one day off every week. The reality of two lines of choristers only means that there is a different child stood in front of them. The current set of lay clerks are, according to Halls, family men with children at home, so they would not be typically inclined to favour one over the other, especially as the girls' line has been established and proven itself for over two decades.

As an interesting note, Halls posits that the men sing slightly differently with each set, though unintentionally. If one group is weak in a particular year, they may sing a bit softer with that group so as not to overpower.

#### **2.1.14. Issues of Recruitment**

The first issue of recruitment in any cathedral is of course, why should a young person want to be a chorister. The answer is what each cathedral must communicate effectively. Salisbury's recruitment DVD, which walks the viewer through the chorister life, aims to answer that. The head of the chorister school related that the chorister life is the only one which gives a young

person the opportunity to work alongside adults in a professional manner, and to work as a team.<sup>57</sup>

The chorister interviewed answered that the big services are what he loves the most about being a chorister - the advent services Darkness to Light, the Christmas services, Holy Week and Easter services, Broadcasts, concerts, and trips to other churches in the diocese to sing.<sup>58</sup> These are the biggest draws and excitement; and that a chorister gets to do all these things with his closest friends with whom he or she lives and works every day is of course a feature.

Salisbury Cathedral recruits locally as well as nationally, as so many cathedral choirs do, but the catchment area is closing in on a 20-30 mile radius with the waning popularity of boarding.

#### 2.1.15. Audition

The audition process has several steps. First is the 'Be a Chorister for a Day' programme which cathedrals all over the country now replicate. Halls attests that the event was invented in Salisbury. On a day in November, children from around the country, though most locally, come to the Cathedral for a fun day in which they get to sing, do activities and arts and crafts, rehearse with the cathedral choir and talk to the choristers, and at the end of the day to sing evensong in the cathedral together.<sup>59</sup> Those prospective choristers still interested then come for an informal audition day, which the parents attend. The children take part in a master class so the parents can get an idea of the environment of a chorister, and Halls can pick out those that might have the best chance.

In these informal audition days, Halls gets a chance to work with each prospective chorister one-on-one, also with the parents present. He takes them through what will happen on the formal voice trial day, and do ear tests and some rhythmic exercises and singing notes and melodies back from the piano. By the end of that day the director will talk with the parents and assess what the situation is, and how to carry on before the formal day:

---

<sup>57</sup> *The Choristers of Salisbury Cathedral* dir. David Halls. Performed by Salisbury Cathedral Choir (DVD) 2010.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

“Nice boy, got a good ear, nice tone, not very good at the scales though, and between now and January you need to get him some singing lessons and you need to get him singing up to Gs and As because there will be children who can”. I put it very straight to them. It’s an inexact science, you can’t say to them “your child will not get in” because you don’t know who you’re going to get. But I’m able to say to them “these are the things that are good”. I mean if a kid is really good, obviously I’d say to them “he’d have a really good chance, I can’t say he’ll get in, but I can say he’s really good, keep doing what you’re doing, and are you looking anywhere else? Please say no!”

According to Halls, the ones who are very good are easy, and the ones who are not very good are easy: he will tell the parents the truth for both cases. The ones in the middle are more difficult; it’s hard for the director to know whether the family will put the effort into the child’s future as a chorister, how seriously they will heed his recommendations.

#### **2.1.16. In Rehearsal**

In the girls’ morning rehearsal with Hall’s, the tone is completely relaxed. The girls in their crocodile rows file into the rehearsal room in the Cathedral, two rows which face the middle, and the director at the piano looking towards them. The probationers are a part of this rehearsal, and stand at a separate table directly opposite the piano. A more senior girl on the end of the rows, standing closest to the probationers, can help them if they are lost at any point in the rehearsal.

Depending on how much music needs to be learned, Halls can take a bit of time to joke with the girls. He has a relaxed dynamic with them; not overly friendly, he can assert authority and they heed his instructions, but it is obvious to any observer that the girls are given the space to enjoy the process of making music together.

The warm-up starts with exercising the mouth with stretches; he asks them to roll their tongue around, which the girls find funny. They begin lightly with humming, starting at an easy middle range and working down into lower ranges before warming up the upper ranges. They then move on to psalms and repertoire.

If the choristers miss an interval, Halls will sing it to them, in his own octave, to correct. He tends to play the piano along with the choristers, not giving too much of their line away, but helping them along from time to time. If there is an obvious mistake that shouldn't have been made, such as a novice-level error in counting, he'll stop playing, which immediately stops the singing, give a teasing 'come on!' and try it again; the choristers get it right the next time.

If there is extra time, Halls can go off-topic; on one morning he riffed the warm-up exercises into different modes and quizzed their knowledge, asking them to sing the next note if in Mixolydian mode, then Phrygian, and so on.

Halls takes considerable time to talk about the music at various points in the morning rehearsal. It might be to talk about a particularly moving piece of text or to explain the dynamics in a certain section, or to remind them that they have learnt certain pieces already so why have they forgotten this articulation? The girls rarely lose focus in a rehearsal; there is no fidgeting or talking between pieces.

This group of girls has a natural blended sound; there are no obvious outlier voices. They have a strong sense of ensemble: their breathing is in sync, phrasing happens naturally, they keep an ear out to the singer on either side, notes move together very well and consonants are crisp and uniform. Their natural sense of phrasing is not the best, but they follow instructions from the director and learn how to phrase on a case-by-case basis for now.

With the boys, Halls is different in his humour and how he teases the boys for mistakes. In one rehearsal, the boys were have difficulties correcting a certain ingrained mistuning. Once it was corrected, then reviewed, one boy made the same mistake again. Looking sheepish, he raised his hand to indicate his error, and Halls stopped the piece to say 'who's the loser now!?' All the boys had a laugh, teasing him that he was 'dumb as a doornail' and the one who made the mistake laughed along with them. When they reviewed the section again, no mistakes were made.

### 2.1.17. Conclusion

Salisbury was the first cathedral to integrate a line of girl choristers, equal and parallel to their existing line of boy choristers. The idea of exact parity seemed very much a given, that the goal should be for girl choristers to do precisely as boy choristers have done for centuries. It took some time for the girls to reach that level, but they have reached the point now in the life of the cathedral's music that so many generations of girl choristers have come and gone that no one questions them any longer. The girl choristers rarely consider the idea of choristership or the place that Salisbury holds, they simply go about their lives.

David Halls is an integral figure here and contributes to the ethos of the music department. His dry wit and self-deprecating sense of humour probably impact the dynamic here considerably, though he does know when to be the authoritarian and when to be the best mate with the choristers and lay clerks alike. He is no-nonsense when it comes to the choir's well-being and maintaining a high standard, and keeps his long-term goal in sight: to leave the choir at the end of his time in a better state than he found it.



## 2.2. York Minster (in residence October 2011 to mid-November 2011)

The Cathedral and Metropolitan Church of St Peter in York, known as York Minster, is the largest Gothic cathedral in Northern Europe. It is the seat of the Most Reverend and Right Honourable John Sentamu, Archbishop of York, the second most senior clerical position in the Church of England after the Archbishop of Canterbury. The city of York has indeed been home to a Christian presence since at least the fourth century; the first Minster was built there in the seventh century, and, though reconstructed several times, the present structure dating from the thirteenth century holds clues to the long history of that house of worship.<sup>60</sup> The music of this church, similarly, has an impressive pedigree: in the twentieth century, organists have included Thomas Tertius Noble and Edward Bairstow, both prolific composers and highly acclaimed musicians of their time.

The active life and ministry of the Minster can most clearly be seen in the liturgy and music: the services held daily, and the music that is woven in with them to enhance the worship and liturgy. The Liturgy and Music department, lead by the Canon Precentor, is given this task. The Precentor, Peter Moger, is the primary custodian of the liturgy and service planning. In many cases, the services follow a prescribed outline: that of either the Book of Common Prayer or Common Worship, but any liturgical elements not set out in the outline fall to Peter Moger to allocate, including hymn selection.<sup>61</sup>

The Director of Music, who reports to the Precentor, is given charge over the selection, preparation and execution of all other musical elements. At the time of research, Robert Sharpe, the Director of Music, plans the repertoire to be sung by the Choir and, assisted by David Pipe, Assistant Director of Music, trains the Choir of York Minster, consisting of 48 choristers and twelve Songmen and choral scholars. Ben Horden, the organ scholar, assists them with organ playing and occasional conducting, and Judith Cunnold trains the youngest probationary choristers (to be addressed further on in this chapter).

---

<sup>60</sup> G.E. Aylmer and R. Cant (eds.), *A History of York Minster* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

<sup>61</sup> Moger, Peter. Interviewed by the author. 10 May 2011.

The Cathedral holds four services daily, open to all who wish to attend. From Monday to Saturday, the schedule is as follows:<sup>62</sup>

7:30 Matins

7:45 Holy Communion

12:30 Holy Communion (12:00 Saturday)

5:15 Choral Evensong (Tuesday to Saturday)/ Evening Prayer (Monday)

On Sunday:

8:00 Holy Communion

10:00 Choral Holy Communion

11:30 Choral Matins

4:00 Choral Evensong

### 2.2.1. The Choir

Integral to life and liturgy of the Minster are the choral services, with music sung by the Choir – either the boy choristers with the men or the girl choristers with the men. The Minster holds eight choral services per week: Evensong from Tuesday to Saturday, a Eucharist on Sunday morning, followed immediately by Choral Matins, and Sunday Evensong. Monday is the Cathedral’s ‘dumb day’ in which the choir is not engaged to sing. On the dumb day, the regular rota of services still takes place, but instead of the Choral Evensong at 5:15, there is a said Evening Prayer, or a visiting choir may sing in lieu of the Minster Choir. This rota of choral engagement is traditional, and many Cathedrals follow a similar outline.

For choristers at York Minster, the ritual of daily Choral Evensong makes up the bulk of their musical life. In their time in the choir, a chorister may learn dozens of settings of the canticles and responses and perhaps hundreds of anthems. The ritual aspects of the liturgy – the movement, standing, sitting, kneeling, turning to face east, and processing – is memorised within about a fortnight just by force of repetition. It is important for the choir to be confident in their leadership in the service; in York Minster, the large congregation is often comprised, in

---

<sup>62</sup> Dean and Chapter of York Minster, ‘York Minster: Worship’, <http://www.yorkminster.org/worship-and-choir/worship.html> (accessed 31 Dec 2014).



large part, by tourists, many of whom may have never been to a religious service, let alone a Choral Evensong. The Choir must stand as a role model of service etiquette.

All of the choristers here must commit fully to the choir; the sheer number of services they sing is a daunting prospect, let alone the rehearsal time. Throughout the year, the choristers sing eight services per week, usually split evenly between the boys and girls, but in addition, choristers are expected to be present at all rehearsals and services leading up to Christmas and throughout Holy Week, even outside of term time. York Minster also claims to be the only Cathedral that keeps a full schedule of services every day of Holy Week leading up to Easter.<sup>63</sup>

Boy and girl choristers also sing for a full two weeks after their school term ends for summer holidays. In addition to these daily responsibilities, the Choir participates in occasional broadcasts and recordings. The choirs' recording, *A Year At York* was released in November 2011, and the most recent CD, *Epiphany at Ebor*, was recorded in mid-February 2011. The choir also broadcasts Choral Evensong on BBC Radio 3 annually.

The 48 choristers consist of 24 boys and as many girls. At any one time, for both groups, twenty of these are full members of the choir and four are probationers. The age range for both the boys and girls spans from eight to thirteen, with four choristers each in year 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8; probationers are typically in year 3 (aged seven or eight).

All Choristers at York Minster, boys and girls, attend the Minster School, and receive a 60% scholarship to their school fees by the Dean and Chapter of York Minster, but can be awarded 100% scholarship on a means-tested basis. The cost currently amounts to approximately £5,000 per year for each of the forty-eight choristers in the Chapter's budget. In addition to this scholarship, each chorister is given an individual bank account into which is deposited a small termly bursary, as incentive for good work and solid commitment. At the end of a Chorister's time in the choir, they are given a cheque for the entire sum in their account.

---

<sup>63</sup> Sharpe, Robert. Interviewed by the author. 10 May 2011.

### 2.2.2. The Establishment of the Girls' Line

The idea of starting a treble line of girl choristers at York Minster came not from the Director of Music at the time, Philip Moore, but rather from the Dean, Raymond Furnell, and the Headmaster of the Minster School, Dr Richard Shephard. By 1996, the year the girls started at York, girl choristers were already well established in Salisbury Cathedral, as well as Bristol Cathedral and Wells Cathedral. Richard Shephard was, in the late 1980's, the Chairman of the Choir School Association, a body that links 44 schools attached to Cathedrals, churches and college chapels in the country, and had visited Wells Cathedral to consult on co-education at the Cathedral School there.<sup>64</sup>

Around 1988, Shephard was invited to direct a short course for the Royal School of Church Music. He related a story to me that during rehearsal he heard a lovely treble voice and found it was coming from a young girl. When he spoke to her at the interval, she expressed frustration that her brother had just been made a chorister at Durham Cathedral, and she could not be one, despite how much she loved to sing. Shephard expressed to me that this was the first time that the idea of girls singing in Cathedrals had ever struck him.<sup>65</sup>

The 1989, a meeting of organists and choirmasters took place in London in which the idea was formally presented. Richard Seal, then director of music at Salisbury Cathedral, was also in attendance at this meeting. On his train ride home he worked out the details of how a line of girl choristers parallel and equal to the boys could work in Salisbury. By 1991 his plan was implemented. Shephard, in his role as Chairman of the CSA, then became integral to conversations to establish girl choristers in other cathedrals.

But at York Minster, the Dean and Chapter and Department of Music were hesitant to take any steps. It was not until 1994, when Raymond Furnell was appointed as Dean, that a period of sweeping change began. Dean Furnell was well known by this time as a man of certain uncompromising standards; in his previous post as Provost at St Edmundsbury Cathedral he had wasted no time eradicating the voluntary, occasional girls' choir, reportedly due to subpar

---

<sup>64</sup> Choir Schools Association, 'About the Choir Schools Association', <http://www.choirschools.org.uk/the-choir-schools-association/> (accessed 10 Feb 2012).

<sup>65</sup> Shephard, Richard. Interviewed by the author. 3 October 2011.

standards, and also removing the organist, as well as his successor shortly thereafter. Furnell, in the words of Richard Shephard, ‘was a man of incisive and combative character’; by all accounts, he was also a man of action and forward motion, and regarded as a ‘startling presence’ and a ‘mover and shaker’.<sup>66</sup> Dean Furnell proposed girl choristers at York Minster; Shephard, as headmaster of the Minster School, and the Chapter agreed, and within a year it was done.

The reasoning was all centred on equality, as Shephard described in conversation:

‘If being a chorister is an education, it seems absolutely wrong we should deny this to half the [eligible] population [of children]. It may well be that girls’ choirs sound different but that’s no reason for saying they are not a worthy vehicle for worship...Even if [the girls] sounded like creatures from another planet, I didn’t think the Almighty was going to object!’

Furnell had it in mind from the very beginning that, if they were going to bring in girls, they would be on exactly equal footing with the boys in terms of workload, scholarship, schooling, and training, or would have the goal of being in a very short amount of time. The questions of how the choir would be set up in the initial stages were all answered by his very clear and detailed vision. What age of girls would they draw from? The boys were years 4 through 8, and so the girls should be also. Where would the girls be educated? The boys were educated at the Minster school—already made co-educational in 1987—and the girls should be also. Will they receive a scholarship? The boys received an 80% scholarship to the school and the girls should receive the same. Who would train the new choristers? The Organist and Master of Choristers at York Minster, Philip Moore, trained the boys, and the girls should receive the same training, granting a little more flexibility to Philip Moore’s schedule with an extra staff member appointed to alternate in taking rehearsals.<sup>67</sup>

Philip Moore, however, had concerns, and a slightly different vision for the direction that the girls line should take. His primary apprehension, as he related to me, was for the integrity of the boys: ‘the boys achieved what they achieved partly because of the frequency with which they

---

<sup>66</sup> K. Jones, L.A. Hampson, and R. Shephard, *York Minster: A Living Legacy*, (Third Millennium Publishing, 2008).

<sup>67</sup> Shephard, Richard. Interviewed by the author. 3 October 2011.

sang'.<sup>68</sup> If girls were to take some of the boys' services, therefore diminishing the frequency of the boys' performing, the quality might diminish also. The boys were singing eight services per week at the time the question of girls arose. Fewer services would mean the boys may not have the opportunity to sing a certain piece of repertoire as often, and would not encounter the psalms as often: it would require much more effort and rehearsal time to refresh an anthem or a psalm that they had not sung for a long period of time.

Furthermore the public expectations for the girls' progress was difficult in Philip Moore's view. With the boys, there were never more than four new choristers in a year, the remaining sixteen were well acquainted with the repertoire and services, and had spent years honing their musicianship. A new group of twenty girls, starting with some singing talent but not yet adept at the learned skills of choristership could take years to achieve the same standard as the boys.

Besides these points, Philip Moore was also concerned about the timing of rehearsals: he was not satisfied with concurrent rehearsals in the morning and lobbied with the Chapter to be able to run one rehearsal after another so that he could have primary training responsibility, instead of having to pass one group over to another trainer. His worries did not end there, however. He would also have preferred the girls to be of an older age range, rather than ending after year 8. In his opinion, at roughly age thirteen girls become young sopranos, quite different from trebles, and can produce a very beautiful and supported tone. It was his belief that it would be a detriment to lose them 'just as they're really getting good'.<sup>69</sup> He did, however acknowledge that older girls would present other problems such as faltering commitment, as coursework gets more difficult, and because of the pubescent hormones of that age.

By Richard Shepherd's admission, and in Moore's own opinion, Moore's concerns went largely unheard in an effort to get the new girls' line in place. Without a unified vision for the Minster Choir as a whole, the new arrangement took some years to gain solid roots. In 1996, the Minster's Dean and Chapter, seeing that it was perhaps too difficult a task for only two people, combined with York University to hire Jonathan Wainwright in a joint appointment as University lecturer in music and the Assistant Choir Trainer at the Minster. Wainwright and

---

<sup>68</sup> Moore, Philip. Interviewed by the author. 11 May 2011.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

Moore initially took on the task of training the boys and girls equally, but in its second year it was decided that this solution was impractical. Philip Moore took on the boys' training exclusively, and Wainwright the girls' training. This solved the problem of consistency in training the choristers: no longer would Philip Moore only train each group for half of the time, he could focus on the boys and Jo Wainwright could train the girls. However this solution was still contrary to Moore's original intention of only one director.

It did present other problems for the men. Daily services were lead by two very different musicians with different stylistic preferences.<sup>70</sup> From day to day, the Minster Choir would sound quite different, particularly in the singing of the psalms: the choral contribution most dependent on the musician's interpretation. The young voices were trained more efficiently, and the choristers had more of a sense of consistency of leadership which was crucial at that stage, but at the cost of the cohesiveness of the 'Minster Choir' as a unified body.

Philip Moore remained in his post as Organist and Master of Choristers until his retirement in 2007, replaced by Robert Sharpe as Director of Music, and David Pipe and Assistant Director of Music at the same time. Jo Wainwright left his post as Director of the Girls' Choir in 2001. He was replaced by John Scott Whitely, previously Assistant Organist, given the new title of Director of the Girls' Choir and Organist in 2001, and just Organist after Sharpe's arrival and the re-ordering of the Girls and Boys' Choirs under the unified name.

### 2.2.3. The Choir Today

Every Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday the choristers have a morning rehearsal, lasting an hour. One day each week the rehearsal will start fifteen minutes earlier for one set of singers. On a typical day, the choristers gather at the Minster School, line up in pairs, and are brought to the Minster under the supervision of Robert Sharpe and David Pipe. The Camera Cantorum (Singing Room), where rehearsal takes place, is located off the South transept, up a narrow spiral stairway. It is a set of two adjoining rooms: the first is more spacious, the second is smaller, also housing the choristers' robes lined on hooks around the walls. Music to rehearse in the morning will have already been prepared the night before by one of the organists and set

---

<sup>70</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the information in the remainder of this chapter and direct quotations of the director are derived from my interview with Robert Sharpe.

in places in either room. This is how choristers can tell which room they will be rehearsing in on the morning if there is any confusion.

Having two sets of choristers necessitates giving a large amount of trust to the Assistant to rehearse one group or the other every morning. David Pipe's rehearsing and conducting must be consistent with Robert Sharpe's goals and he has a friendly rapport with both sets of choristers. However, it is clear in rehearsals that the choristers are not quite as focused with the Assistant as they are with their Director. The girls especially can become talkative in David Pipe's rehearsals, particularly between pieces or when a smaller group is rehearsing. Ultimately, Robert Sharpe must rely on his Assistant Organist to prepare the choristers exactly as he needs them to be prepared, and the system here is successful and efficient.

**Table 7: York Minster Directors\***

		8:00-8:15	8:15-8:30	8:30-8:45	8:45-9:00	9:00-9:15	4:14-5:00	Evensong
Tuesday	Boys							
	Girls							
Wednesday	Boys							
	Girls							
Thursday	Boys							
	Girls							
Friday	Boys							
	Girls							

\*An example week of rehearsal schedule for boy and girl choristers. Red denotes a rehearsal led by Robert Sharpe, blue by David Pipe. Flexibility is built into the system, particularly in the morning rehearsals, if Robert Sharpe needs more time with the other group, it is possible to change places. Also if David Pipe is directing Evensong on Tuesday or Friday, Robert Sharpe will rehearse the other group from 4:15 till 5:00.

This configuration also necessitates that Sharpe be completely organised and in control at all times: he must know which group has learnt which music with which trainer, and review any music they have rehearsed with Pipe so that he can assess the work yet to be done. Whilst this is an extra step, the dividends of a very highly rated daily service are worth the extra effort involved.

In the Camera Cantorum, the choristers have assigned places in standing choir desks in a 'V' formation, slightly angled so that Sharpe at the piano can see every chorister down the row to the end. These places coincide with their places in the quire downstairs. The senior choristers are spaced evenly through the lines. For the three boys in year 8, one is in the centre of the decani side, one in the centre of cantoris, and one on the end of cantoris, closest to the director. Year 7 boys are placed on the far ends. The girls have an unusually large year 8 group, six of them as opposed to the usual four, and so the year 8 senior girls take the four ends and the two middle spaces. The youngest novice choristers for both boys and girls are placed between the most confident senior choristers.

Blue-ribboned Duncombe badges, formerly awarded to the head and deputy head choristers, denote the year 8 choristers when vested. The medal attached to the ribbon is a silver cross with the crossed keys of St Peter overlaid. Sharpe eradicated Head chorister appointments when he took the post in 2008. His experience at his previous post as director of music at Truro Cathedral had taught him to distance himself from the practice of declaring any chorister better than any other, as it causes problems of competition and an unhealthy attitude amongst choristers and chorister parents alike.

In York, he wasted no time re-organising the leadership positions among the choristers. In Moore's time, choristers in their penultimate year were all given badges, and two choristers from the top year were head and deputy head chorister. Sharpe believes this gives the impression that after year 7, only two of the choristers are important, and the other are no longer needed, which is damaging to morale. Additionally, the parents can sometimes feel as if they are the most important choir parent if their son or daughter is the most important chorister, leading to tensions at choir social events, and a skewed idea of the purpose of choristership. With all year 8 choristers wearing badges, it becomes an honour that they earn for their commitment to the choir for four years. They know they must live up to the honour of being senior choristers by showing strong leadership and the badge is a reminder of the hard work they have done in their years in the choir.

#### 2.2.4. In Rehearsal

The morning rehearsals always begin with a thorough warm-up, beginning in the middle range of the voice, working upwards. The director and his assistant are both keen to correct problems within the warm-up and the process is not taken lightly or rushed. A weak onset of tone, space and resonance issues, lack of confidence pitching an interval, and development of a mixed register vocal range are all addressed in the warm-up whilst the basic purpose of waking up a live instrument early in the morning takes place.

For Sharpe, the warm-up is crucial for young voices; most of the choristers do not receive individual voice lessons or coaching, so the warm-up is an opportunity to instil good singing habits that will in turn make the rest of the rehearsal more productive. He is especially concerned with a well-supported 'ah' vowel, which for children of that age and in that early stage of learning vocal technique is a useful transitional vowel: it is effective in all parts of the range and feels natural to form, and is a vehicle for teaching important points such as an open jaw and the space necessary to sing higher notes.

Perhaps due to these efforts the choristers sing with a healthy and supported tone, and some older choristers are developing a natural vibrato. The director encourages a natural vibrato that blends well with the other voices in the large space. In a solo context, a voice with vibrato will be heard in the nave: no small task for even a mature voice. Sharpe does not hold to the traditional notion of the Anglican choral sound, recognisable by a delicate straight tone. In York Minster Choir, a straight tone is used occasionally only for effect, such as in a pianissimo section, or to convey a certain mood of the text.

The morning rehearsals move from the warm-up to the psalms, and here York Minster sets itself apart: the boys and girls both rehearse the evening's psalms every day, no matter which group will be singing in the evening. It is a given that when any cathedral brings in a line of girls, the boys will be singing less often and at York they sing exactly half of their previous workload. The psalms have been an integral part of the Anglican choral tradition for centuries: it is the mark of a seasoned chorister that the psalms are almost memorised by the end of one's time in choir just from singing the verses day in and day out. To encounter the psalms only half



as often could be detrimental not only to the tradition of psalm singing, but even more so to the rehearsal. It could occur that one group may not see a certain day's psalms for several months, which will take up rehearsal time to relearn. When Sharpe took his post, he identified the problem and ordered two copies for all of the psalms, 'so if day 11 comes around for the boys in March and they haven't sung it since [last] July, well they've actually rehearsed it every month'. It is a risky idea; one might presume it is not worth the time to rehearse music that the group will not be performing, but in the grand scheme of the vast body of music that the choristers must learn, it is imperative that the choristers keep each day's psalms fresh in their minds. For this director, the mark of an excellent choir is in their psalm singing, and he ensures that every day's psalms, so often treated as secondary to canticles and anthems in many cathedrals, are sung to the highest possible standard.

### **2.2.5. Repertoire and Music Learning**

Morning rehearsal moves on to the repertoire: evening canticles and anthems, mass settings for Sunday morning Eucharist and morning canticles for Sunday Choral Matins, as well as any larger works for special services. Sharpe chooses the repertoire that each group learns before the term starts. The process begins always with liturgical appropriateness: if the girls are singing on a certain feast or saint's day they must learn a piece appropriate for that day and likewise with the boys, or else utilise a piece from their current repertoire.

Very few pieces in the repertoire are shared between the girls and boys, as they rarely sing together. It is only for the larger services, such as Christmas and Easter, and an occasional major feast day that the choristers will be combined. It would be unfair for one or other group to be denied the opportunity to sing these high profile and high-energy services. There is much excitement about the filled-to-capacity Nave, the possibility of solo opportunities, and the chance to impress visiting relatives.

The girls do occasionally sing on their own apart from the men; the boys do so also but more rarely. This is for the benefit of the men and scheduling their contracted days off on two Wednesdays per term. Typically the girls are scheduled to sing on a Wednesday, and so it is the

girls who sing alone. This does not affect the repertoire drastically: on some of these occasions, the girls simply sing the treble line only of a typically 4-part piece.

Liturgical appropriateness is of the utmost important in repertoire selection, and Sharpe has proved his sensitivity to liturgical needs. In Michaelmas term 2011, on the feast of Saints and Martyrs, the girls learnt the anthem 'What are these that glow from afar' by Alan Gray, depicting the glories of the saints and martyrs in heaven. On Remembrance Sunday, the boys sang Herbert Howells' 'Take him, earth, for cherishing'. Written shortly after the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the motet commemorates the life and death of a man, and implores the Almighty to take his soul to heaven.

In the absence of a saint's day, a piece fitting the appointed readings is scheduled; the girls sang Edgar Bainton's 'And I Saw a New Heaven' at an evensong in which the scripture reading from the Book of Revelation featured the text of that anthem. Liturgical sense and sensitivity to the whole service in the larger scale of the Anglican liturgical year is a critical skill in the director's post. Sharpe's strong relationship with clergy, particularly with the Precentor, Peter Moger, in charge of liturgy and music at the Minster, is bolstered by his high regard for the integrity of the liturgy and its collation with the music.<sup>71</sup>

After liturgical factors are considered, other aspects such as the current repertoire of each group, the time available for rehearsing, and the vocal suitability of a piece are taken into account. Another major factor in repertoire choice is variety. Robert Sharpe is keen to programme music of differing styles, and from different centuries. This serves to provide both the choristers and the congregation with the experience of a wide array of music. Great care is put into the music scheme and the planning is for a whole term, not for a month or week. Whilst this method is more time-consuming, it all leads toward the whole vision for the Choir and Minster, and toward the goal of a choir and congregation engaging together in liturgy and music for the purpose of a higher worship.

In rehearsal, the choristers stand to sing for the entire hour with almost no fidgeting, and all focus is centred on the director. Typically the canticles and anthem for the evening will come

---

<sup>71</sup> Moger, Peter. Interviewed by the author. 10 May 2011.

first, depending on how well they know the repertoire. The normal procedure does not consist of any complicated system of music learning; in Sharpe's words they 'just get on with it'. There is no time to use a pedagogical training model when young musicians must perform every day no matter what achievement level they have reached. The requisite theory knowledge needed to comprehend the basics of singing is taught in the probationary year before they join the main choir, and any gaps in musicianship will be filled in through the daily routine.

This process of learning the finer details of musicianship does not take very long considering the vast amount of music they must cover. Here is where the older choristers must provide solid models of leadership. The younger choristers, not yet fully acclimatised to the rigours of daily intensive music making and perhaps struggling with harder pieces and sight-reading, learn by imitating the older and more experienced ones. The girls are particularly adept at this: several times in the span of a morning rehearsal one can see an older girl bending down to point the words for a younger one, subtly singing closer to the ear of the less experienced girl beside her. The boys are less pastoral; confident singing and model behaviour much more subtly express the qualities of leadership in the older boys.

The process of music learning, with either the director or assistant, is very much a 'just do it' mentality. A new piece will be set in front of the choristers, and they simply sight-read as best as they can until it falls apart, which happens only rarely, as the choristers are quite skilled sight-readers. After they sing through the piece, Sharpe tends to work from the end backwards in sections to fix notes until the choristers are comfortable with what is written on the page. He may only rehearse a few sections of the piece, and then set it aside for several days before revisiting it. By two weeks prior to the performance, the piece should be learnt and can then be gradually polished. The idea is to keep the music fresh so the choristers are not bored by it, but really learn it well, and far in advance of when they need to sing it. He is careful to avoid introducing a piece the day it must be performed, and it takes a large amount of preparation and planning of rehearsals to achieve this goal.

As for music learning, both the boys and the girls are incredibly skilled musicians who approach a difficult piece of music in a slightly different way. The girls are adept at difficult music – tricky rhythms, hard leaps, fast tempos – but they tend to be scared initially by the look

of the page before accepting and ultimately truly enjoying the more difficult music. Sharpe attributes this to the year 8 girls, who in his view are more mature than their counterparts in the boys' line, and are more aware of what looks 'hard' and what does not. The year 8 boys tend not to think about the music in terms of surface-level difficulty and charge straight into it. Both groups can ably get around a very difficult piece in a short amount of time; the difference is in the approach and initial perception that must be overcome for the girls.

In rehearsals, the director and assistant director use the piano often, but not in a way that is detrimental to the choristers' musical education. The choristers must sing tricky intervals before the notes are given on piano, and will be given only slight help once they have read the music independent of the accompaniment. Otherwise, in the morning rehearsal the piano is used as a rhythmic tool, and a way to prepare the choristers for the full choir rehearsal. Sharpe can play notes that clash or play every entrance apart from the treble line to ensure the trebles' confidence once the men join them.

#### **2.2.6. Differences in Training**

As one finds in any Cathedral, the girls and boys react quite differently to directions given in rehearsal, and the director must discern the best way to make his point with each group. For Sharpe, this took a period of experimentation; when he came to York in 2008 he had had little experience with the training of young girls but had worked with boys for over fifteen years. He admits he had a few moments of saying the wrong thing to the girls and causing some tears in rehearsals, but he has realised it takes a different approach. In his words, with the boys 'you can look down the line and say "can you start watching me, you've been looking right in your music all morning and you need to stop". If you try that with a year 8 girl, she'll burst into tears. They need more of "that was fantastic, brilliant, but what would really be good is if you give me your eyes just slightly more, it would make me happy"'. The same message comes across, but from a different angle.

### **2.2.7. Pre-Service Rehearsal**

Evening rehearsals must be productive and absolutely efficient: the hour before evensong is for polishing the evening's repertoire and rehearsing in the quire with the men. Choristers spend the first five or ten minutes upstairs in the Camera Cantorum on their own to vest and warm-up voices and perhaps review a few places in the music that were not firmly ingrained. The Choristers are then led in pairs down to the quire where the men take their places at 4:25.

The Choir's stalls are halfway down the length of the quire, so that the congregation surrounds them during a service. Choristers are in the front row, with the men in the row behind. By the time the men and choristers are combined in the quire for rehearsal, all should know the music; this is the time for polishing, not for learning. The men are expected by this point to have warmed up their voices sufficiently and to have addressed any difficulties with the music on their own.

Rehearsals start promptly, usually with the psalm, which typically needs only a bit of work at the chant changes if there is more than one chant. The repertoire for the evening will dictate how much time is spent in rehearsal. If the pieces are known very well, there may be only one or two small points to check, and the rest of the rehearsal time can be spent on upcoming repertoire that is more difficult. The rehearsal must end fifteen minutes before the service begins so that the congregation can take their seats in the quire.

### **2.2.8. Recruitment and Audition**

Chorister recruitment for York Minster's Choir has grown significantly in the last two years, partly due to new and innovative recruitment tactics as well as the rising profile of the choir and reputation around the community and beyond. In 2011, there were thirty-five applicants, of which twenty-five came to audition for eight places offered: the largest turnout for auditions in York for over thirty years. Sharpe has employed the use of television and radio spots as well as advertisements in the newspapers and website. Aware of the pull of prestige for prospective choristers, he is also keen to have reviews for the Choir published often for large events and recordings. Most recently, *A Year At York*, the CD released in October 2011, was given five stars in *Choir and Organ* magazine and the Choir broadcast Evensong on the BBC for the

Minster's Patronal feast, St Peter's day, in June.<sup>72</sup> Having the Archbishop of York proclaiming the praises of the Minster Choir whilst in other churches in the diocese is a significant help as well.

A major factor in the recruitment process is the draw of the Minster School, and specifically the fact that it is a day school rather than boarding. This has bent the recruitment numbers in the Minster's favour in recent years. Thirty years ago, it may have been more difficult to recruit for a day school because boarding was more in fashion. But boarding, in recent decades, has fallen out of favour amongst parents of young children. Currently, choristers come from the local York area, or are within 30-40 minutes' drive.

The Music Department at York Minster is not the only deciding body in the audition process; the school, which plays so large a part in the life of the choristers, also carries some weight as to who receives a place and so an academic test is part of the audition day. Choristers who cannot earn a place in the school cannot earn a place in the choir. Sharpe has yet to come across any difficulty with this; generally, he has found if a young person is bright enough for the choir, the schoolwork will not be a problem.

So what is the Minster Choir looking for in a prospective chorister? 'A spark in the eye really, and the kind of obvious enthusiasm for the work, not for any kind of finished product'. The audition day includes ear tests, singing back a phrase or repeating a rhythm, which is weighed heavily in the final decision. The top priority for Robert Sharpe, however, is the happiness of the child: if they are obviously not interested in being a chorister, they will not enjoy themselves and will not find choir to be a fulfilling experience. Also important to weigh in the decision is reading skills. Besides music reading, there are a lot of words to read; a child who is not quite quick enough at reading will fall behind and could become unhappy and resentful in choir.

### **2.2.9. Probationers**

Once a child has successfully passed the audition, he or she is offered a place in the choir and the school and will start their probationary period at the beginning of the academic year. The

---

<sup>72</sup> G. Kay, review of *A Year At York*, dir. Robert Sharpe, *Choir and Organ*, Nov 2011.

probationers do not rehearse with the main choir; they have their own boys-and-girls-combined rehearsal, led by Judith Cunnold, on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings in the Chapter House.

These probationer rehearsals serve a variety of purposes, all aimed at preparing the newest singers in the choir for their full choristership: they can become acclimatised to a resonant space, learn the proper behaviour of a chorister, learn how to read Anglican chant and psalms, practice producing a healthy sound with good vocal technique, and also have a sense of identity as a group which will follow them through their time in the choir. Judith Cunnold's rehearsals are all based on musicianship and choristership and very quick; there is never more than five minutes where the probationers are in one part of the room or only doing one thing. The fast-paced but very fun environment results in engaged, focused, and happy children; they are almost always smiling and are not even aware of the skills they are learning in the process. Friday mornings have a slightly different angle and are led by the Chancellor, Glyn Webster, or the Precentor, Peter Moger, who teach the children the basics of the service and some theology and introduce them to the building where they will be spending so much of their time.

Judith Cunnold's rehearsals with the seven probationers begins the moment they walk into the South transept of the minster; they form pairs and must walk in two lines to the Chapter House, and because there is an uneven number, they must decide who will walk without a pair and what is the appropriate place for the unpaired chorister in line, all of this silently and without delay. When they reach the Chapter House, the octagonal room off the North transept of the Minster, they immediately start physical exercises catered to young children: they jump, run, breathe, stretch, and move, all whilst learning to follow directions and not talk whilst receiving direction. They imitate a set of drums whilst learning to keep a steady beat and execute a precise rhythm. Throughout this rehearsal they move from wall to wall, and face many different directions. Cunnold faces away from them into the room and demonstrates a high sighing sound, which they imitate back to her: they are learning the sound of their own voice in a space, and how much air they must use to make enough sound for the room, which is only a fraction of the size of the quire. They take turns singing individually on small warm-ups and then in groups and all together, which is preparation for both solo work and blending with other voices, and an exercise in confidence in singing alone or with others. The group moves to

another side of the room. Here they are given papers with a rudimentary psalm chant with the words of the Magnificat. They sing through pieces of the psalm chant to sol-fa hand signs, and practise reading the words and navigating how the words move on a page. These are critical skills used daily in the choir, and which must be firmly entrenched before they join the larger group. After handing the papers in, they move to the middle of the room and learn a new rhythm, which they repeat from flashcards in different orders. Sometimes they split into groups and turn the rhythms into a canon to practise their skills at part-work and holding one's own line. They move to another part of the middle of the room and sing through fun songs they learned to sol-fa and have now put the words to: some of them are done in canon up to four parts, some have actions, all help in learning to hold one's part despite distractions elsewhere, whilst of course making a healthy and blended sound. The end of rehearsal may include a fun game such as finding a certain stone carving in the Chapter House, part of learning to feel comfortable and really know the building and its architecture and history.

Cunnold has been working with the probationers for eleven years, but it is only in recent years that she has been given full clearance to create a pedagogical programme catered to them. Until recently, she worked with these novice choristers for only one or two days a week and then gave some private vocal coaching. Since the restructuring of the department upon Sharpe's arrival, she has been able to implement her method fully and it has been effective. She is able to create a stronger trust bond with the children based on mutual and consistent respect, and this makes the probationary period much more productive.<sup>73</sup>

Cunnold measures progress by a series of goals: by Christmas, the probationers will be joining the full choristers for one Evensong per week. After the New Year they will join in the morning rehearsals twice a week, by the end of the academic year they will put on their own Evensong for friends and families in the Chapter House. Within these landmark points in the choristers' year there are smaller goals: within a month they should be able to confidently sing out in the Chapter House and sing together with a blended sound, know the proper vocal technique with some occasional reminding, and follow instructions. By the end of Michaelmas term they should be able to comfortably read a psalm in Anglican chant, and should be able to sing in

---

<sup>73</sup> Cunnold, Judith. Interviewed by the author. 2 November 2011.



two or three parts and hold their own line. Goals are added as they progress and some years progress more quickly than others.

#### 2.2.10. Chorister Equality

‘People should come for the worship or for the music or both,  
and not be put off by the fact they’ve got the “wrong choir”’

Robert Sharpe

The boy and girl choristers at York Minster are truly equal teams; there is no difference in liturgy or quality of music-making between an Evensong on a Tuesday with the boys and an Evensong on a Wednesday with the girls. York Minster Choir is one unit, made apparent to the congregation by the music scheme listing found in every seat in the quire. When Sharpe arrived in 2008, he was enthusiastic about his vision for a reorganised music department and in his second year he stopped the practice of noting in the scheme which team of trebles was singing. It was his wish that the choir was one unit, not two separate choirs. Previously, the scheme was noted with ‘Sung by Girls and Men’, but he felt that implied that not only the girls but also the men were a separate entity from York Minster Choir, which is not the case. ‘Sung by Girl Choristers and Gentlemen of the Choir’ would fill too much room and the scheme would look disorderly. Wells Cathedral uses a system of small pictorial codes with a key to their meaning. In his view expressed to me in conversation, any of those options would not only confuse the congregation, but also serve to separate the choir and lessen the unity that the newly reorganised department was striving for.

From the extent to which the girl choristers are a part of the life of the Minster, it would seem they have been one half of the treble line for much longer than fifteen years. The practicalities of equality - the girls receiving equal scholarships for equal work, the same training, even the same vestments, among other aspects - follow through with genuine sentiment. The presence of the girls is simply a part of the Minster’s life, and by no means a token gesture. In order to examine the daily life of a girl chorister at York Minster, one must view them in the context of all the choristers, for there simply are no distinctions in their role. All of the choristers serve to uphold a tradition of choral music found in York Minster, as in most cathedrals, for centuries.

More importantly, they are incorporated into the future vision of the choir; goals and plans for improvement and a raised profile do not separate the girls from the boys, the choir moves forward as an inseparable unit.

Perhaps the most controversial factor in the question of boy and girl chorister equality is the actual sound, and there is no immutable rule as to the differences between boys' sound and girls' sound. It is, however, generally agreed that the real key to the sound is the training: in those cathedrals where both sets of choristers are trained primarily by one person, rather than a separate director for one group, the sound tends to be similar. Physiological differences do have an effect, but in Sharpe's view, they are just challenges to be overcome towards the goal of a highly rated choir.

In his first year, he spent much of his time focusing on how the girls were producing sound. He discovered that with a group of bright girls, who naturally have a very pretty tone, it would be easy to just let them sing through without putting in much of an effort; a 'lazy' sound was still a pleasant one. Compounded with this is their amiable nature and intelligence, and very soon the sound could easily become lazy. A 'true, treble sound' must be produced, and is different from the natural untrained girls' singing voice: it is not as light, it is supported with proper breathing technique, and vowels are formed consciously with the aim of a fuller, brighter sound. In Sharpe's words, it is the difference between 'producing the sound, rather than just pruning it'. In his experience, the trained boy treble sound makes a more natural 'bloom' to the sound, particularly in the last year or two before the voice change. In those years for a girl, the voice naturally starts to transform from a child's treble to a woman's soprano tone, and care must be taken to blend this sound with the younger members of the choir. With proper training, the girls can go through their full time in the choir and still sound quite similar to a boy trained in the same way. In the director's view, it simply takes more effort for a girl to become a treble than for a boy, but that does not mean it cannot be done.

It is very difficult even for regular members of the congregation to hear a difference between the boys and girls at York Minster today, and nearly impossible for those less familiar with the Choir. In June 2011, the Choir's broadcast of Choral Evensong on BBC Radio 3 incited some

debate in an online forum as to the voices heard.<sup>74</sup> Sharpe used the twenty most senior choristers of boys and girls combined for the broadcast, a tactic rarely used for such a service and especially controversial, as this information was not published. He enjoyed the debate, and for his first York CD, released in November 2011, he did not publish which tracks were sung by boys and which by girls. That few listeners assessed the answer correctly, either for the recording or the BBC broadcast, is a testament to the training at York Minster: Sharpe has indeed moulded a healthy treble sound in the girls that is nearly indistinguishable from the boys and also can blend well together.

### 2.2.11. Challenges

The 2012-2013 choral year brought a new challenge for the Choir of York Minster in recruitment for both teams of choristers. For the girls, the top year had five, rather than the usual four: one girl repeated a year in school. The 'top-heavy' numbers resulted in only three probationers appointed for the girls. There were only three coming into the full choir, which caused a disruption in recruitment numbers that had to be amended the following year.

The boys faced - and continue to face - an even more serious problem: voice change. In the 2011-2012 choral year there were only three boys singing in year 8, the fourth already lost to voice change. Even more distressing were the year 7 boys, of whom all four were on the verge of early voice change. For much of the 2012-2013 year, there were no year 8 boys in the full choir. Though he had not encountered this problem before, the director made a more concerted effort to prepare the year 6 boys, who were to be thrown into early leadership before they normally would be, and to begin the process of promotion for the boy probationers earlier in Lent term so they felt prepared and confident to take their place with the full choir as soon as possible.

A further challenge for the director is defending the changes to the choral foundation amidst accusations that traditions are being tarnished. Though there exist many arguments against girl choristers being incorporated into the Cathedral tradition, Sharpe sees no inherent issue.

---

<sup>74</sup> The Radio 3 Forum, 'CE York Minster 29 June 2011', posted 29 June 2011  
<http://www.for3.org/forums/showthread.php?2473-CE-York-Minster-29th-June-2011&highlight=CE+York+Minster> (accessed 10 Feb 2012).

Commenting on changes to an institution whilst maintaining a vital tradition, he believes the key is flexibility and thinking outside the box. In an interview, he gave an example of the psalm-singing:

‘...They always sang the complete prayer book psalms for the day... regardless of whether or not [the choristers] were lacking in confidence. On some longer evenings now we just do half one month, half the next, so I’ve got a bit more time to really do the psalms. Also the children can get really bored with fifty verses to sing. ...I had the complete Chapter agree to start to do that and it transformed the service, because the choristers weren’t bored of the whole thing and it still feels like the Prayer Book’.

For the director, the main factor to keep in mind is maintaining the traditions at heart but not to the detriment of the worship. Of course he is aware, however, that sweeping changes to the structure of the choir and liturgy should be made with great care. Coming in 2008 for a post - the description for which stated that complete restructuring would occur and the new Director of Music would be taking on both sets of choristers in an effort to make them truly equal teams - gave him a blank slate to present his vision with no preconceptions of how the choir operated before his time.

Under his direction, the Choir of York Minster has achieved a very high standard and has made great changes in a very short amount of time, largely regarded as positive by the York Minster community. For him, the connectedness of the music and liturgy to the whole life of the Minster is integral to his job, and something about which he must be both sensitive and vigilant. Working in the context of worship for hundreds of people - Christians, local residents, tourists, clergy, families, young, old - necessitates a very high standard every day in order to lead the prayers of the congregation. Those sensitivities, as well as the tradition of Anglican choral music, require a Director informed of the history of this music but also willing and able to add a new perspective to the worship. In Robert Sharpe’s words, ‘...sticking rigidly to an old system is dangerous. Rather than thinking the last thing I want to do is change, you’ve got to be thinking maybe we could make something healthy out of change and do something better’.

### **2.2.12. Conclusion**

York Minster has set itself apart in recent years in the forefront of equality for girl and boy choristers, owing to a restructuring of the Liturgy and Music department, to include a change of

personnel. The previous system of boy choristers trained under Philip Moore and girl choristers trained by Jo Wainwright and John Scott Whitely, whilst solving the problems of time management and organisation at a time when the inclusion of girls was essentially an experiment, led to a mind-set of separation and a lack of unity amongst the department and the Minster. Given the circumstances in which girl choristers were introduced - the Dean and Chapter pushing a decision forward without the full support of the Director of Music - it is easy to understand the difficulties up until the restructuring in 2008. Philip Moore did not have the advantage of creating an essentially 'new' choir: he had to fit twenty extra choristers into a working system, the arrangement of which had been successful for many years under his own leadership and the leadership of his predecessors. Under the new regime, Sharpe had, upon his arrival, the luxury of creating his own vision of a highly rated cathedral choir that already included boy and girl choristers with no preconceived notions of what had gone before. It is an added advantage that this 'central command' structure under one Director, rather than a divided leadership, plays directly to his own leadership strengths, particularly his ability to manage subordinates in an amiable way and fold them into his own vision and goals. Robert Sharpe's ambition of constantly raising his own standards, and expecting the choir to do the same has clearly paid off.



### 2.3. Durham Cathedral (visited 17-19 November 2010, 28-30 November 2012)

The Cathedral Church of Christ, Blessed Mary the Virgin and St Cuthbert of Durham, commonly known as Durham Cathedral, is a cathedral of the New Foundation. Building work for the present cathedral began around AD 1093, on the site of the existing bishopric that had been established a century earlier. It is possible that a new building with more space was required for the use of Benedictine monks who had been brought to together at Durham in 1083.<sup>75</sup> The present cathedral, along with the castle on the opposite end of the Palace Green, is a UNESCO World Heritage site, built under Bishop Carilef who was later appointed by William the Conqueror as the first of Durham's 'prince bishops'. Carilef and his successors were tasked with leading the church and also guarding the north of England from Scottish invasion until 1836 when the secular duties were removed from the position.<sup>76</sup> The Norman cathedral stands on a promontory over the River Wear, appearing almost as a fortress overlooking the city.

The Cathedral is primarily a house of worship, carrying on many of the traditions established by the Benedictine monks nearly ten centuries ago. Three or four services are held here daily; over a week, eight of these are choral services.<sup>77</sup> The choir leads the music and worship at Evensong services on Tuesday through Saturday, as well as Matins, Eucharist and Evensong every Sunday. The young choristers are engaged for seven of these, whilst the choral scholars and lay clerks (the men of the choir) sing alone on most Thursdays.<sup>78</sup>

#### **Monday to Saturday:**

7:30am Holy Communion (Wednesdays only)

8:45am Morning Prayer

12:30pm Holy Communion

5:15pm Evensong (Tuesday-Saturday)

5:15pm Evening Prayer (Mondays, when there is no visiting choir for Evensong)

---

<sup>75</sup> J.Murray (ed.), *Handbook to the Cathedrals of England*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1869)

<sup>76</sup> The Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 'History of Durham Cathedral', <http://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/heritage/history-of-durham-cathedral> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

<sup>77</sup> The Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 'Worship and Music', <http://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/worshipandmusic> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

**Sundays:**

8:00am Holy Communion

10:00am Matins

11:15am Sung Eucharist

3:30pm Evensong

**2.3.1. Cathedral Choir and Governance**

The choir itself consists of forty choristers: twenty boy choristers and probationers and twenty girl choristers and probationers who sing the top line of the choral repertoire, as well as six choral scholars and six lay clerks who make up the alto, tenor and bass sections of the choir.

The choristers all attend the Chorister School, which is governed by the chapter of Durham cathedral and the head teacher Mrs Yvette Day who has a musical background (a BMus and MMus, and formerly Director of Music at St George's School at Windsor Castle).<sup>79</sup> The school, located just outside of the Cathedral's cloisters, was founded in the fifteenth century to educate the boy choristers, and in the mid-twentieth century opened its doors to educate non-chorister pupils aged 3-13, alongside the choristers already enrolled.<sup>80</sup> It is a boarding and day school, although the Cathedral choristers are required to board full-time after their probationary period.<sup>81</sup>

Oversight of the school's governance and budget is in the hands of the Cathedral chapter with the Very Reverend Michael Sadgrove, Dean of Durham, at its helm since 2003. His second in command, The Reverend Canon Dr David Kennedy is also the Canon Precentor, who heads the liturgy and music of the Cathedral. Five further clergy are members of the chapter, in addition to two lay members, Adrian Beney and Carolyn Roberts, included fully in the governing responsibilities they share with the clerical members of the chapter. It is this

---

<sup>79</sup> The Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 'Welcome to the Chorister School: About Our School', <http://www.thechoristerschool.com/about-our-school/> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Lancelot, James. Interviewed by the author. 19 November 2010.



governing body that makes the decisions for daily running and operation of Durham Cathedral and the Chorister School, and it was also this body that ‘said yes to women’.

### 2.3.2. The Decision to Say *Yes* to Women

Until 2009, Durham Cathedral’s choir consisted of half as many choristers, and those twenty were only male. Although the school educated both male and female students, the Cathedral Choir had yet to include females in their ranks. In 2009, Durham Cathedral became the most recent cathedral to welcome girl choristers into their choir, and they have done so on a completely equal basis with the boys. It may be that Durham is the only cathedral where every chorister boards, every chorister receives an equal financial incentive, and both sets of choristers sing an equal number of services. Durham Cathedral Choir boasts twenty girl and twenty boy choristers (although at the time of research, there were some un-appointed places for both boys and girls), all in years 4 through 8, all of whom attend The Chorister School and receive 50% tuition assistance from the Cathedral.<sup>82</sup> The two teams of choristers share the eight weekly choral services equally between them, singing together only occasionally throughout the year.

It is interesting that this highly rated cathedral waited nearly twenty years after Salisbury’s inclusion of girl choristers to move to add girl choristers into their own choir. After all, eight choral services a week with twenty boarding boy choristers and a prestigious cathedral choir school places Durham in a ‘Tier One’ position (that is, with five or more weekday choral services);<sup>83</sup> many cathedrals have only half as many choral services a week, and have no choir school at all.

According to Adrian Beney, the question had indeed been raised many times in the chapter from as early as 1994. The topic was contested not so much in regards to gender equality or choral tradition or any of the arguments in favour of an all-male choir or against women in the church, as primarily a matter of finances being seemingly unworkable.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Lancelot, James. Interviewed by the author. 19 November 2010.

<sup>83</sup> Hill, B., ‘The Organisation of Music in Cathedrals in the United Kingdom’, (Cathedral Organists Association, 1993).

<sup>84</sup> Beney, Adrian. Interviewed by the author. 26 November 2012.

For Durham Cathedral, every chorister represents a minimum £6,000 per annum commitment, even greater for some choristers whose families experience economic hardship.<sup>85</sup> This is not including the extra staff necessary to manage twice the number of choristers: house mothers and assistants, an extra music staff administrator and assistant organist in order to run dual rehearsals in the same amount of time. In addition, the boarding facilities had to be altered to accommodate two genders. (Before the girl choristers, only two or three girls were boarding at the school. Facilities needs for two girls are vastly different than the facilities needs of 20 girls).<sup>86</sup>

Though the Cathedral remained silent on the issue of girl choristers prior to 2008, the desire to expand their chorister ranks had existed at Durham Cathedral behind the closed doors of chapter meetings for at least ten years prior to the fulfilment of the vision.<sup>87</sup> Adrian Beney's predecessor as lay member of chapter at Durham Cathedral was Professor Ann Loades, Professor Emerita of Divinity at The University of Durham and a major figure in feminist theology. Dean John Arnold, the Dean of Durham Cathedral from 1989 to 2002 was also very much in favour of adding girl choristers into the Cathedral Choir in his time as Adrian Beney related, and after the first service sung by the girl choristers, after Dean Arnold's retirement, he sent a note expressing how dearly he wished he could have brought in the girls during his time.<sup>88</sup>

The Chorister School was also in favour of the move and had ample provisions to teach additional pupils in their classes according to legal class size regulations. However, in the words of Adrian Beney:

'...It was very much our view that if we were going to have girl choristers we were going to have them on equal terms with the boys. So it wasn't going to be the case where we have the boys sing mostly and occasionally we have a girls top line as well. It was not going to be tokenistic; it was going to be equal... One suggestion was we'd have a boarding top line of boys that we've always had then we'll have a top line of girls who will be day girls and they'll sing once a week. That would have been easy...but our view was if we're going to do this then they are going to be choristers on an equal footing with boys. So the financial cost of that decision was pretty high.'

---

<sup>85</sup> Beney, Adrian. Interviewed by the author. 26 November 2012.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

James Lancelot, Master of the Choristers and Organist at Durham Cathedral since 1985, was in agreement.

### 2.3.3. Musical Leadership

For over 25 years, James Lancelot has directed the Cathedral Choir, as well as the Cathedral Consort of Singers, a voluntary mixed-voice ensemble consisting mainly of University students.<sup>89</sup> His primary duties at the cathedral involve the training of choristers and supervision over the music planning and music staff, working with the Canon Precentor David Kennedy, who oversees the Liturgy Department. David Ratnanayagam, Assistant Organist appointed in June 2012 (previously Organ Scholar) and Francesca Massey, Sub-Organist appointed in September 2011, assist James Lancelot in the training of the choristers and organ playing for services at the Cathedral. Prior to the Sub-Organist and Assistant Organist appointments, Oliver Brett, Assistant Organist from 2009 to 2011, aided the Master of the Choristers in running rehearsals for the dual treble lines.<sup>90</sup>

### 2.3.4. Chorister Life

After their first year as probationers, all choristers are required to board full time at the Chorister School. They have lessons in school with their non-chorister peers, with musical education scattered throughout. The typical day for a chorister, boy or girl, is as follows:<sup>91</sup>

7:00 wake up

7:30-8:00 cooked breakfast

8:10-8:50 rehearsal

9:00-12:15 Lessons

12:15-2:00 lunches

2:00-4:00 Lessons or Games

4:00-5:15 Rehearsal/Shopping/Free Time/Music Practice (dependant on the day)

---

<sup>89</sup> The Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 'The Organists', <http://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/worshipandmusic/organists> (accessed 09 Dec 2014).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> The Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 'Welcome to the Chorister School: About Our School', <http://www.thechoristerschool.com/about-our-school/> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

5:15-6:00 Evensong

6:00-6:30 Supper

6:30-8:15 Prep and recreation

8:15-9:15 Supper, Showers, Bed

### 2.3.5. In Rehearsal

The girls typically rehearse in Prior's Hall, located just outside of the cloisters: a room not purpose built for music making but usually used as a meeting space for corporate sponsors of the cathedral, lecture series or Bible study groups.<sup>92</sup> As such, there are no benches or stalls available for choristers as in many cathedral rehearsal spaces. The walls are dark wood panelled, but the rest of the space is modern and fitted with facilities. The girls must quickly fling their cloaks and mortar boards aside, usually to the floor by the wall or over a railing, find their music stands, arrange them in a U formation around the piano and find their music folders before rehearsal starts.

By contrast, the boys rehearse on a morning in the song school, found through a small door in the cloisters and up a very old winding stairwell. This room is clearly a purpose made rehearsal space, with long stalls at which the choristers stand and where their music rests, and stools for perching when the director allows, the dusty shelves on the walls holding part of the choral library. Here, the music has already been placed for the choristers before rehearsal begins, and the boys follow in rows to their spot on the rehearsal stalls, corresponding to their place in the quire. Perhaps the girls are better suited to quickly arrange their rehearsal space without loss of focus, whilst the boys run amok at the smallest opportunity to do so.

James Lancelot's rehearsals with the girls are very much the same as with the boys: fast paced, expecting very high standards in behaviour and in musicianship, and highly focused and energised. There is no tolerance for chat or distraction, and the director quickly fires off rounds of questions about the intervals, the note names, key signatures, time signatures, directing each question to the age group most suited to the level of challenge. The oldest girls might be posed a question on the key signature and its relative minor, the middle years perhaps a question on

---

<sup>92</sup> The Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 'Venue Hire', <http://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/visit/venue-hire> (accessed 09 Dec 2014).

the interval, and they may have to sing an interval such as a major third or perfect fourth as an example to the rest of the team. The youngest choristers might be asked to name the starting note or answer how many beats a certain note is to be held.

The morning rehearsals start with a short warm up, mostly to wake up the upper registers. As the warm-ups progress into the rehearsal – usually starting with the psalm chant before moving into repertoire – the choristers blend more and more and become a more cohesive unit. Two years in, this group is still becoming acclimatised to singing with each other, singing in this setting and as a unit, and that cohesiveness will probably come with time, as with any choral group. In these early days, the choristers don't yet change notes precisely together, and there are still several distinctive voices not yet blending in tone with the others. Overall, they make a good sound and are enthusiastic, responsive, and focused.

### 2.3.6. Treatment of Choristers

In order to elicit the best result from the boys and the girls, Lancelot is just slightly different with them in rehearsal, primarily in the way the choristers are critiqued for errors. 'I think you can be quite, not aggressive with a boy, but you can be very direct in a way that might really upset a girl and that might not get you the result that you want.'<sup>93</sup> With the girls, he might point out an error in a general way, even if he knows which individual has made the mistake, then try it again to see if the chorister has sorted out the issue. He reminds them in rehearsals that if they are aware they have made a mistake that they should raise their hand so that the whole group doesn't need to go over the section again and waste time. With the boys, James Lancelot might be more inclined to point out a single boy who has made an error, as they tend to be less sensitive to individual criticism. It's not an infallible rule, however: '...with the boys, you can be direct, but you know, sometimes one gets frustrated, and they have their reactions!'

If a chorister makes a mistake, Lancelot has a specific method of addressing it. In his own words:

'The best thing is if they accept that they've done wrong, they feel bad about it, but they're given a leg up to do better and they know it won't be held against them forever.'

---

<sup>93</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the information in the remainder of this chapter and direct quotations of the director are derived from an interview with James Lancelot.

That's the best way really. If you must make them feel small it must be relatively brief. They need to know why; they need to know they've let themselves down. I will say to them, if there's been a grave mistake or even a silly mistake that's come up again and again, I'll just ask them what they think will happen if that happens in the service. The answer is not necessarily having them do lines or getting whacked, it is they'll go to bed feeling miserable and they'll wish they'd got it right. And you don't want them to go to that place. And also they've let down their fellows. So if you can do it that way, it's easier said than done, but if you can do it that way it helps. It's mutually supportive then, and they know they're a part of a team and they know that they're striving to do something really well'.

Lancelot's conducting gesture is a diagnostic approach. Whilst there is an idea of a standard conducting pattern, frequently it is abandoned in order to fix a problem that he hears in the choir. His fingers are outstretched and inviting rather than stifling, and his pattern is centred high rather than at chest level in order to facilitate visibility.

### 2.3.7. Repertoire

In music repertoire choices, the boys and girls have mostly separate repertoire, with only occasional overlap. The breakdown of choices came somewhat organically. Of the initial repertoire selection, Lancelot says: 'When the girls were new I tended to repeat a piece fairly soon after they'd sung it... It's quite nice that when you get to the anthem you can think "hey I've sung this before!"'

After a few terms, the girls had a body of works that they knew fairly well, and the boys, having not sung those pieces for some time, just slowly handed over those pieces to the girls. In this way, the girls now have the Vierne mass in their list, whilst the boys retained the Langlais. Likewise, the boys have forgotten the Byrd Short Service *Te deum*, but have kept the Gibbons fresh on their repertoire. Though the girl choristers are now only in their fourth full year, the boys seems unfazed by the repertoire shifts. As James Lancelot relates, 'I'll often find if we're doing a combined choir thing at another place, I'll ask if they can sing a certain anthem, and the response will be "no that's a girls' piece"'.

The two teams do share a certain amount of repertoire, as they sing together for bigger services and feast days, and the director is careful not to deny the bigger choral classics from either

group; both teams sing Howells' *Collegium Regale Magnificat and Nunc dimittis*, Stanford's *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in C* and Parry's *I was glad*, among others. For these pieces the choral library houses two sets of copies and the repertoire remains common to both teams of choristers.

### 2.3.8. Music Teaching and Learning

When introducing a new piece, James Lancelot tends to check that the choristers know the key, time signature and starting note, then leaves the rest to the choristers to sight read. He doesn't help very much at the piano; if anything, he will play the lower parts. This method is fairly strict: even if the choristers must spend precious minutes of a rehearsal to get one interval right, they must find it on their own before he plays it for them on the piano. Lancelot's method for teaching music is the same with the boy and girl choristers, with the main difference in the musicianship of the choristers. With the boys, he can depend on a handful of boys every year who have probably sung the piece before, so the learning isn't as time-consuming a task.

Because the girls are relatively new to singing, the general level of musicianship of the group is quite low, but according to Lancelot, the same is somewhat true for the boys as well. 'More and more I feel I'm starting again as time goes on, because the knowledge base of the children who come in nowadays is so relatively low compared to what it was a quarter of a century ago. Most of them don't read music when they arrive, which would have been unheard of at one time, to have a chorister who couldn't read music.' It is one of his goals to improve the sight-reading of both groups; to an extent this occurs naturally over the course of an academic year, but there is a need for a focused effort.

Francesca Massey commented on the differences between the boy and girl choristers in relation to music learning:

'As a huge generalisation, sometimes girl choristers will need more encouragement, especially when learning a new piece as they can be more self-conscious about getting things right. Boy choristers I find tend to be less phased by the 'unknown' (this isn't to say they're any more accurate or musically proficient - it just means they throw caution to the wind a little more)'.<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>94</sup> Massey, Francesca. Interviewed by the author via e-mail. 17 March 2013.

The addition of the girls line, and subsequent relief of half of the boy choristers' workload, means there is more time to spend improving musicianship skills. Another factor working in their favour is that choristers are required to learn an instrument. In the girls' line especially, with a greater proportion of singers completely novice, the added practice time is a great benefit.

### 2.3.9. Other Directors of the Cathedral Choir

Because morning rehearsals of the boys and the girls happen simultaneously, Lancelot is assisted by Francesca Massey and David Ratnanayagam, the Sub-Organist and Assistant Organist, respectively. Whilst both the boy and girl choristers are focused and attentive with any of the three directors, there are significant differences in dynamic that can be observed in rehearsals.

With the girl choristers, David Ratnanayagam seems to model his rehearsal style on Lancelot's: very focused and quick moving, not tolerant of chatting or wasting of time. The choristers are not quite as focused on this occasion with the assistant organist as they are with the director. Lancelot hardly needs to speak aloud that there shouldn't be any chatting between pieces, where Ratnanayagam must remind them on occasion. Like the Director, the Assistant Organist is often throwing questions to the girls, quizzing them on their music theory knowledge and contextual understanding of various pieces.

Francesca Massey takes a similar approach with the choristers, but her emphasis on vocal health was considerably more prominent. During the observed rehearsal, she dedicated more time to physical warm-up, which is an aspect very often missing from chorister rehearsals with many directors, and, at least in this instance, less prominent in the rehearsals of Ratnanayagam and Lancelot. (Though Massey does not normally attend rehearsals led by her colleagues, she hypothesised that perhaps in the observed rehearsals they may have been pressed for time, as Lancelot and Ratnanayagam are conscious of the necessity of a thorough warm-up).<sup>95</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Massey, Francesca. Interviewed by the author via e-mail. 17 March 2013.



In her rehearsal with the girl choristers, she takes them through breathing and stretches, and begins the warm-up in a mid-range on a hum before opening up the sound into warm vowels as [a] and [o] and corrects the vowel placement in the warm-up. Whilst Lancelot and Ratnanayagam also do this, Massey devoted, on this occasion much more time to this and demonstrates the value and importance of this part of warming up on a morning. In her own words:

‘My focus on warm-ups comes from both my own experience of a singer and also work I’ve observed with other choral directors and singing teachers...I think it’s imperative to start a rehearsal with a warm up, both physical and vocal (just as you would before going for jog!), especially first thing in a morning. I do this with the boys, too, so it’s no special treatment for the girls!’<sup>96</sup>

The dynamic between Massey and the girls is unique. The girl choristers seem much more at ease and relaxed; there is an air of informality in this rehearsal. The leader and the group seem to comprehend each other in a different way, and a more cohesive dynamic could be observed with this leader than with her counterparts. With the Director and Assistant Organist, the group find cohesion with each other, but in that dynamic the leader is less incorporated into that unit. There are so few women in cathedral positions that the dynamic between Francesca Massey and this group of girl choristers is a rare one to observe.

### 2.3.10. Practicalities of a New Treble Line

Lancelot is a director of very high standards and is highly principled. He bases his leadership style on bringing the choristers into the ethos and message of Durham Cathedral: its history, its spirituality, and its goals, all working together for a common purpose of worship and tradition. He compares the choral standard metaphorically to the building itself: ‘One false knock with the chisel, and you have to start the thing again. Measure twice, cut once. I’ll say to [the choristers] “do you think it mattered to the people who built this cathedral that they got it right?” It reinforces the message of this building that excellence is worth striving for and anything that happens in here really matters.’

---

<sup>96</sup> Massey, Francesca. Interviewed by the author via e-mail. 17 March 2013.

His support of the girl choristers is likewise based on the spirituality and message of Durham Cathedral as a house of worship: 'I think it's common humanity really. It looks wrong, it's perceived as wrong; whatever the arguments in favour of all-male choirs, and they're strong, we all know that it looks wrong. When a single-sex approach becomes an obstacle to the spread of the gospel and to evangelism and to mission, then you have to address it.'

Once the decision had been made and the preparations underway, Durham Cathedral posted a press release in May 2008 to advertise forthcoming voice trials for the new team of girl choristers. The first voice trials were in September of that year, with several more taking place throughout the year. Some of the new recruits were already pupils at The Chorister School, and a few were even boarding already, and some entered the school during the last term of the 2008-2009 school year.

By April 2009, James Lancelot had recruited his girls' line and could start work with ten of them already present; by coincidence a rather high proportion of these girls were in year 7 and 8, setting up a strong foundation of leaders in the group. In that first term, James Lancelot worked with the girls on tone production, learning some piece of repertoire, and the basics of choristership: where to go, the choreography of a service in the cathedral, singing in the choir stalls and the expected rehearsal etiquette. They even rehearsed occasionally with the men and sang alongside the boys in some services.

The rest of the girls' line joined in September 2009, and daily rehearsals began in earnest. By the start of this first official choir term with girl choristers, nearly half of the full load of 23 new choristers had been training and became role models for the completely inexperienced newcomers. This pre-training term meant that the brand new choir started with a core group of de facto 'senior choristers'; even if they only had months rather than years of experience, it was still an advantage. The debut service of the girl choristers was in November, and up to Christmas the girls sang only once a week. In the new year they sang twice a week through Lent. In Michaelmas term of 2010, the start of their second full year, the girls had worked their way up to full parity with the boys.<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> 'Grant That What We Sing with Our Lips...', *News from Durham Cathedral*, Winter 2009, p. 3.

One must not forget the boys' place in these changes, however. The Durham Cathedral Choir has at its core a group of forty choristers, not two separate entities. Lancelot was careful to protect the morale of the boys during the girls' very fast transition. Before their arrival, the boys were singing seven services a week, and it can be a destabilising factor to suddenly have the workload reduced. In the director's view, children of that age might be prone to think they are no longer wanted or valued if certain measures are not taken.

Lancelot attributes two things to the continued success of the boy choristers: the first was the speed at which the girls were brought in and the series of high profile events in which they were involved in the same year. The girls may have been receiving attention due to their novelty, but the boys were asked to sing for a large televised concert with the pop musician Sting, followed by a televised Memorial concert for a footballer, both of which brought huge crowds into the Cathedral. Not to mention the regular routine of big services at around the same time: Advent carols services, Christmas services and concerts and Festivals of Nine Lessons and Carols. In Lancelot's words: '[the boys] had no time to feel like the spotlight was off them because it was very much on them'

The second factor in caring for the morale of the boys was not quite so positive. Recruitment for the boys line has been on a downturn in recent years, and they were not singing at full strength. The boys were mostly very young at the time and not all the places were filled (a situation which remained until my last visit in Spring 2013). If the boys were to be singing seven services at their current strength they would be severely struggling, but now with half the load of services they can manage the responsibility fairly well. They have seen that the girls are performing to high standards and appreciate a team working beside them.

The girl choristers are all aware of the historical significance and the role they play at Durham Cathedral. At the end of that first year (2009-2010) the choir's leavers, boys and girls for the first time in the cathedral's history, were interviewed for the *News From Durham Cathedral* publication's 'View From the Pew' segment.<sup>98</sup> Anna Roberts, a senior chorister, is quoted: 'I am most proud that on November 1<sup>st</sup> a whole choir of girls was made into choristers. I was lucky to be part of that choir and the Cathedral. It was a once in a lifetime chance and I will never be

---

<sup>98</sup> 'View from the Pew', *News from Durham Cathedral*, Summer 2010, p. 10.

able to repeat that moment. It was an amazing experience and all of us enjoyed it and felt proud afterwards. We all made the history books as the first girl choristers of Durham Cathedral'.<sup>99</sup>

### 2.3.11. Challenges

Lancelot, in his own words, was initially concerned that his biggest challenge would be coping with an 'effeminate' sound in the girl choristers but he has found this is not the primary concern. He did train them to keep the sound tall with the proper vowel positioning, to create an open space for vocal resonance and quality of tone and does remind them of these techniques, but his new challenge is to 'make everything sound lovely. When they know a piece well they make a really wonderful sound, when they feel edgy and nervous, the throat closes up, they don't open the vowels, they don't yawn, and you get a slightly edgy sound. I'm not terrifically happy with the sound they're making at the moment, not all the time...'

He does believe there is a difference in the sound that boys and girls make, even at their best, which relates more to physiological differences than training or skill. '[the girls' sound] doesn't have the immediate impact that the boys have; they can develop through a long note and have a bloom that the boys don't have, but it doesn't have that punch which the boys can do.'

### 2.3.12. Chorister Hierarchies

There is a separate hierarchy for the boys' and girls' lines; each team has a head chorister, deputy head chorister, and the remaining top years are 'senior choristers' who wear the Cuthbert cross with their choir robes. The director chooses the head chorister, and in consultation with the other organists, the teachers at the school, as well as cathedral clergy, and sometimes holds a vote amongst the choristers, but reminds them that ultimately the vote will not actually sway the final decision.

In a head chorister, Lancelot is looking for a strong leader socially as well as musically, with good vocal technique. Sometimes, he says, it can be a difficult decision, and the best singer in the group might not be the head chorister, sometimes the natural leader of the group is very

---

<sup>99</sup> 'View from the Pew', *News from Durham Cathedral*, Summer 2010, p. 10.

obvious and sometimes he or she is more subtle in their leadership. In those cases, 'one is sorry one can't give it to more than one person'.

### 2.3.13. Recruitment and Audition

A major challenge at Durham cathedral presently is recruitment, particularly for the boys. Of late, an average turnout for auditions might be three boys for two places, and maybe only four or five girls, also for two places. In the first few years of the girls' team, girls' recruitment consisted of a great number of younger sisters of former boy choristers, but it is the boys who are not coming forward.

The socioeconomic status of the region is a major factor in the dwindling numbers of young singers turning up for auditions. Programmes such as the government sponsored 'Sing Up!' and the continuing outreach efforts have drawn two or three choristers, but on a larger scale, the families at state schools in the region would not be able to meet even the reduced tuition and boarding rates for the School.

For those that do come forward to audition, the director describes a successful candidate: 'I'm looking for vocal promise and a good ear, but above all a sort of quickness of reaction, the light in the eyes, the spark. I'm looking for someone who loves singing and who's passionate about singing, and that's what you really want'. Once they gain a place, the chorister will need to maintain high academic standards set by the school and not become overwhelmed by the chorister timetable: the daily routine of both the boy and girl choristers is staggering. A bright child who is passionate about singing will find the strength to persevere in this environment.

The Cathedral has several musical outreach initiatives that support the recruitment to a small degree including The Cathedral Music Outreach programme, formed in 2005 as part of the government's *Sing Up!* programme. The choristers take turns - girl choristers and then boy choristers - visiting eight primary schools per term.<sup>100</sup> The choristers sing with the primary

---

<sup>100</sup> The Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 'Music Outreach Programme', <http://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/worshipandmusic/music-outreach-programme> (accessed 09 Dec 2014).

school children, led by the music outreach director, in a joint session to learn the music for a concert at the end of each term.

There is also a community choir for children aged 8-13, the Durham Cathedral Young Singers. This group meets on Saturday morning during term time, and they sing in concerts, festivals, and other events. This choir feeds into youth choirs for older children, and singers are encouraged to continue on in singing after their time in the Young Singers.<sup>101</sup>

#### **2.3.14. Conclusion**

Durham Cathedral, though very late to the girl chorister trend, executed the task of integrating a new line of trebles with tremendous speed and efficiency. The choral programme is similar to that of York Minster and Salisbury with two exactly equal lines of choristers. They are the only cathedral, in fact, where all choristers board, all receive an equal bursary, and all sing the same number of services.

The girl choristers, though only in place for five years at Durham Cathedral, are very much a part of the cathedral's core mission of worship. They are thoroughly woven in to the life of the cathedral. The leadership at Durham have shown with the decision that they champion human rights, and when given the opportunity, they boldly proclaim it with pride.

---

<sup>101</sup> The Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 'Music Outreach Programme', <http://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/worshipandmusic/music-outreach-programme> (accessed 09 Dec 2014).

#### 2.4. Bristol Cathedral (visited 27 Feb – 1 March 2011)

Bristol Cathedral is very much an inner city cathedral. Nestled in the heart of a large city of culture with nearly half a million residents, the Cathedral shares the spotlight in the city with the University, art galleries, media centres, festivals, and science and technology centres. In this high profile hub for many industries and disciplines, the Cathedral and its choir, though not central to the life of the city, are held in high regard.

The Cathedral and its associated school were originally founded as an abbey church of Augustinian canons of the 12th century, and dissolved under Henry VIII in the sixteenth century.<sup>102</sup> Re-founded as the seat of the bishop of the new diocese of Bristol, the Cathedral began its new life in 1542.<sup>103</sup> The musical history of this building, like so many others, revolved around a choir of men and boys probably as far back as its abbey days.

Today, the Bristol Cathedral carries on the monastic tradition of worship with daily services, of which seven are choral. The regular services on Monday through Saturday are as follows:<sup>104</sup>

8:30am Morning Prayer

12:30pm Holy Communion

3:30pm Choral Evensong (Saturday)

5:15pm Evening Prayer (Thursday)/ Choral Evensong (Monday to Wednesday, Friday)

And on Sundays:

7:40am Matins

8:00am Holy Communion

10:00am Cathedral Eucharist (with choir)

3:30pm Choral Evensong

---

<sup>102</sup> T.F. Bumpus, *The Cathedrals of England and Wales* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1926).

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Bristol Cathedral, 'Regular Services', <http://bristol-cathedral.co.uk/faith-worship/regular-services/> (accessed 09 Dec 2014).

### 2.4.1. The Choir

Bristol Cathedral Choir consists of 28 choristers, six lay clerks and four choral scholars. They sing the Choral Evensong services on Monday to Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday as well as the Sunday morning Cathedral Eucharist.<sup>105</sup> The choristers are split evenly: 14 boys and 14 girls, all educated at Bristol Cathedral Choir School, a state funded, music-specialist academy.<sup>106</sup> The boys and girls are engaged in an equal number of services over the course of a fortnight, and the weekly schedule is, roughly, as follows:

**Table 8: Bristol Cathedral Choral Services**

Monday Evensong	boy choristers with lay clerks and choral scholars
Tuesday Evensong	girl choristers with lay clerks
Wednesday Evensong	boy choristers alone
Thursday Evening	Evening Prayer, no choir
Friday Evensong	lay clerks and choral scholars
Saturday and Sunday services	girl or boy choristers with lay clerks and choral scholars

The schedule of course is flexible; some Wednesday services may engage the girl choristers alone to sing. Each group of choristers has alternate weekends off: the same group will sing the Saturday and Sunday services.<sup>107</sup>

This system of exactly equal responsibility of the boy and girl choristers is relatively new and came about with the establishment of Bristol Cathedral Choir School as a state funded Academy in 2008.

### 2.4.2. The Academy and the Girls

The history of the girl choristers in this cathedral is inextricable from the school and the circumstances which lead to its re-ordering as an academy.

<sup>105</sup> Bristol Cathedral, 'Regular Services', <http://bristol-cathedral.co.uk/faith-worship/regular-services/> (accessed 09 Dec 2014).

<sup>106</sup> Bristol Cathedral Choir School, 'Academy Introduction', <http://www.bccs.bristol.sch.uk/Home/Prospectus/About-BCCS/Academy-Introduction> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

<sup>107</sup> Lee, Mark. Interviewed by the author. 28 February 2011.



Bristol Cathedral School, as it was known until 2008, had been an independent boys' school since 1976.<sup>108</sup> It was from this school that the line of boy choristers was taken. The boy choristers were offered a 50% reduction in school tuition fees, costing the cathedral approximately £3000 per year per chorister.<sup>109</sup> Gradually, economic circumstances made this financial obligation a struggle to maintain.

Adding to this cost, the location of the school, in the centre of Bristol and its urban sprawl, became a detriment to school recruitment, and in turn to its financial resources. Bristol has many schools, and many highly rated independent schools. For a Cathedral School already struggling, the competition was fierce.

In 1993, the Cathedral's Chapter became aware of the growing trend of girl choristers in many cathedrals in the country. With little hope of being able to fund such a treble line to any standard, the temporary solution was to bring in a line of older girls, on a volunteer basis, to be an occasional choir when the boy choristers were not singing. They were a separate body from the cathedral and the school, and the cathedral employed a director on an occasional basis to teach them treble-voice repertoire.

But the financial struggles continued, and indeed worsened in the early 2000s. The Cathedral School became coeducational in 2005, still as an independent school.<sup>110</sup> The volunteer line of girl choristers had not yet, in the director's opinion, reached an acceptable standard to simply fold them into the existing Cathedral Choir. The next year, Mark Lee and then-Precentor Brendan Clover decided that a line of girl choristers should be given a real chance, that is, the chance to do what the boy choristers have done for over nearly a century in that place. In the initial decision to have a more established and equal girls' line as a full part of the Cathedral Choir, the biggest concern for Lee, who has held the post since 1998, was to uphold the tradition of the boy choristership. The imperative to bring in the girls in the right way that wouldn't inadvertently end the history of boy choristers at Bristol Cathedral was a priority.

---

<sup>108</sup> Bristol Cathedral Choir School, 'Academy Introduction', <http://www.bccs.bristol.sch.uk/Home/Prospectus/About-BCCS/Academy-Introduction> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

<sup>109</sup> *Unless otherwise indicated, the information in the remainder of this chapter and quotations of the director are derived from my interview with Mark Lee.*

<sup>110</sup> Bristol Cathedral Choir School, 'Academy Introduction', <http://www.bccs.bristol.sch.uk/Home/Prospectus/About-BCCS/Academy-Introduction> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

In order to manage the financial strain, the monetary incentive for choristership was reduced to 25% of school fees for boy choristers, and the same for the new line of girl choristers. In that first year, there were only four or five girls, bolstered by some of the more senior boys on a rota until they could sustain their line independently.

With the new line of girl choristers, and the goal of complete equality with their counterparts well underway, the school was still burdened by financial pressures. In 2008, the school elected to become a state funded Academy with music and maths specialisations, the first Cathedral School to embark on this route.<sup>111</sup> No longer burdened with recruitment in a poor economy, or maintaining chorister scholarships, the Chapter was relieved of a great deal of pressure.

### 2.4.3. New Challenges

Academies are a relatively new feature in the UK education system. A sponsor, in this case the government, invests up to £2m into the capital costs of the school, and in return has an influence over the recruitment, curriculum, ethos, and specialism.<sup>112</sup> Academies typically have one or two specialist subjects, for which they can select up to 10% of their total pupils for aptitude.<sup>113</sup> For Bristol Cathedral Choir School, the specialist subjects are maths and music.

Because the Choir School is an academy sponsored by the government, the structure of the choir is constrained by government regulation, which presents challenges for the choir, particularly in recruitment efforts. All recruitment for the choir must be done through the confines of recruitment for the school. The catchment area for this day school covers not only the junior schools in the Bristol area but also those in the surrounding counties: Somerset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Bath and Wells. Students receive a place at the school via a lottery system; only the choristers can be 'selected', and those that are represent a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds.

---

<sup>111</sup> Bristol Cathedral Choir School, 'Academy Introduction', <http://www.bccs.bristol.sch.uk/Home/Prospectus/About-BCCS/Academy-Introduction> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

<sup>112</sup> UK Government, 'Types of School: Academies - GOV.UK', entry posted 12 Nov 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

<sup>113</sup> Bristol Cathedral Choir School, 'Academy Introduction', <http://www.bccs.bristol.sch.uk/Home/Prospectus/About-BCCS/Academy-Introduction> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

Because visiting only one or several schools in order to recruit choristers would be seen as favouritism, no schools can be visited for recruitment purposes. Recruitment information about the choir is provided to all who are interested in the school. In an effort to promote fairness in school recruitment, the academic standards of the school are not relevant to recruitment; in the school and in the choir, academic prowess covers a wide range from the poorest students to the brightest.

Recruitment policy at Bristol is further constrained by the fact that the school starts at year 7, and thus the choir also starts in year 7. This presents a problem for the boy choristers, who may only be able to depend on their treble voice for two years of choral work, whereas the girls can continue to sing through year 10 with no difficulties. In the girls' line, therefore, half of the choristers will be more experienced than any of the choristers in the boys' line. They will be more familiar with the cyclical repertoire, and they will have the benefit of two or three additional years of music tuition and sight-reading.

Because of the larger span of ages in the girls line, by virtue of boys' voice changes, Lee worries less about the girls' voices than he does with the boys. A girl of 15 or 16 can be relied upon to have the working treble range that a boy does not. That the most experienced boy choristers and strongest leaders in the boys' line could lose their treble notes at any moment is a constant worry for the director, and he does take great care to treat vocal issues to ease the transition as best is possible, both for the sake of the choir and for the emotional and psychological trauma which can ensue for a boy chorister when his voice breaks. This impacts the repertoire that is chosen for the boy choristers as well; he might tend to give the boys slightly less taxing repertoire, and in a higher range to take advantage of the strengths of the boys' voices before the break.

#### **2.4.4. In Rehearsal**

The girls and boys rehearse in the morning, and are led alternately by the Director and Paul Walton, the Assistant Director. They rehearse for 35 minutes, occasionally given leeway to rehearse for an hour if attendance at the school meeting is not essential for the choristers.

Occasionally the boys and girls will warm up together before one group is taken away to rehearse separately.

In the girls' rehearsal, the choristers are arranged on *decani* and *cantoris* sides. Each team has a head chorister, positioned in the middle, with most senior choristers on the ends.

Inexperienced choristers are placed in between the experienced ones who can offer assistance if needed.

The rehearsal with the Assistant Director has an informal feel; choristers interrupt the rehearsal to ask for water, and some engage in whispered conversations whilst others are rehearsing a solo or the other team is singing. Mistakes are met by a fanfare of giggles and whispers, and time must be taken to refocus. The assistant does not correct posture, diction and vocal technique; this rehearsal is primarily for learning notes.

The girls alone have a distinctly feminine sound. The most confident and experienced singers who influence the overall sound, and indeed make up approximately half of the girls' numbers, are aged fifteen and sixteen, closer to sopranos than to trebles by this point.

On this particular morning, Lee returned with the boys to rehearse the Byrd 5-part mass with both groups together. The tone of rehearsal changed significantly. Lazy vowels and diction were corrected immediately, and the errant chatter, amongst the girls in particular, was immediately cut off. When combined with the boys, the girls are less eager to volunteer to demonstrate a solo, whereas in the separate rehearsals, they were confident and more relaxed to do so.

The boys and girls of Bristol Cathedral Choir learn music in exactly the same way, which facilitates a smooth transition from separate rehearsals to joined ones. Taking advantage of the girls' quick reading skills and also the greater span of chorister years for the girls who will remember a piece better, music is simply put in front of the choristers and they read through it. 'It's a process of refinement; you're bringing it in from wide focus into a tight focus over a period of time.' But Lee is careful not to over-rehearse the music; he tries to leave enough 'nervous edge' for the service so that the choristers are engaged and excited rather than working on autopilot.

#### 2.4.5. Personalities and Hierarchies

Although the choir in its current state is a relatively new set-up - the girls have only been incorporated in this way for just over five years - Lee does notice some interesting patterns of behaviour in the girls and boys.

‘There’s a sort of vague notion that essentially boys are always up for the challenge, they’ll have a go and worry about the mistakes later, and the girls are much more cautious and they need to be absolutely clear in their minds that they’re right before they put themselves out there. That may well happen in a lot of places, but it’s definitely not the case here. Those scenarios are actually reversed here.’

Lee hypothesised that these girls are more independent and thick-skinned than one might find in other cities, for several reasons. First, Bristol Cathedral Choir School is very much an inner-city school, and Bristol is a very tough place for young girls. In order to survive and thrive in the city, a young girl might adopt a ‘tough’ facade. Secondly, the school was all male only not so long ago, and the student ratio, at time of research, is still two-thirds male to one-third female. Thirdly, and perhaps as a result of the other two factors, the girls in the school simply have bigger personalities, which Lee has observed in his time there.

This is not to say that the girls are more stereotypically masculine, or that they think, react and respond in the same way as the boys. As is the case in many other cathedrals, the girls respond to instruction in a different way from the boys. They are more sensitive to sarcasm, and don’t like to be individually criticised, they don’t recuperate quite so quickly as the boys do if their individual faults are publicised to the whole group.

Socially, the girls are more nurturing than the boys; the older girls tend to be more maternal with the younger ones. But the social structures of the girls can be very complex. On the one hand, the oldest girls are supportive of the younger girls, and it is not uncommon to see hugs and pats on the back and physical contact in the girls. But on the other hand, when there are social issues, the whole system can break down. Because the older girls have a different hormonal reaction than younger girls would, social issues must be solved through facilitated communication and mediation or else the musical product is affected. This has not been the case in the boys’ line.

The hierarchy among the girls is particularly well respected in the group; the head choristers for decani and cantoris sides are truly emulated. Lee shared an incident in which the girls on decani side were being casual in a rehearsal, and the head chorister from decani simply gave the line a stern look, an unspoken chastisement and command for them all to contribute as much as she was to the rehearsal, and the line suddenly sprang into action.

Head choristers are chosen for different qualities, and by the time a chorister reaches the top of the choir, they have many different skills to bring. In 2010-2011, the head choristers were very different personalities. The decani head chorister was a fantastic soloist, and could be relied upon to read very difficult sections and lead vocal technique by example. Her counterpart on the cantoris side was a more reserved leader, very considered, and brought a sensibility and authoritative inner-calm to the group. Choosing head choristers can be difficult for Lee; a child being expected to lead other children is a difficult thing, and it must be within that chorister's personality to do so without too much strain.

#### **2.4.6. Conclusion**

Bristol Cathedral's choir is inextricably linked to the choir school which is a government-run academy. The main challenge to overcome in this choir - the shifted age range, particularly detrimental to boy choristers - is a result of the academy's policies. But the choir school would not have continued without the restructuring, and it would have been nearly impossible to have girl choristers on an equal level with the boys without the school's decision.

## 2.5. Ely Cathedral (visited 24-27 April 2012)

The Ely Cathedral Girls Choir, known as ECGC, is comprised of girls in years 9 to 13 who board at the King's School. This group sings regularly at the Cathedral, and in every way looks to be a part of the Cathedral Choir, but ECGC is unique in that the girls are not actually members of the cathedral's charter. They are in effect one of two very separate choirs who share choral service duties.

ECGC is a choir funded and supported by the school, with their own director, Sarah MacDonald, and Assistant Director, Oliver Hancock, their own repertoire and schedule.<sup>114</sup> They are folded into the Cathedral's existing musical life, around the Cathedral Choir, which is a traditional arrangement of men and boys under the Director of Music, Paul Trepte, and Assistant Director, Jonathan Lilley.

The founding of the girls' choir was highly contested. Michael Higgins, Dean of Ely from 1991 to 2003, was staunchly against the inclusion of girls, for reasons of tradition and finances.<sup>115</sup> Paul Trepte, too, was wary of upending the centuries-long tradition of men-and-boys' choirs. In 2003, Michael Chandler replaced Higgins as Dean, and was eager to begin a choir of girl choristers, but financial resources were limited. The following year, Susan Freestone was appointed the new Head of the King's School, where the boy choristers board, which was co-educational already. Chandler and Freestone worked together to establish the infrastructure for Ely Cathedral Girls Choir as a joint effort between school and cathedral.

ECGC began in 2006 with Louise Reid as Director for the first two years. When she took maternity leave in 2008, Sarah MacDonald stepped in on a temporary basis; at the time MacDonald had held the post of Director of Music at Selwyn College, Cambridge, for nearly ten years. During this period of maternity cover, ECGC released their first commercial CD and sang their first tour in France under MacDonald's baton.<sup>116</sup> In 2010, Reid again took maternity

---

<sup>114</sup> MacDonald, Sarah and Oliver Hancock. Interviewed by the author. 25 April 2012

<sup>115</sup> *Unless otherwise indicated, the information in the remainder of this chapter and quotations of the director are derived from my interview with Sarah MacDonald and Oliver Hancock.*

<sup>116</sup> Ely Cathedral, 'Ely Cathedral Girls' Choir', <http://www.elycathedral.org/worship-music/ely-cathedral-girls-choir> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

leave, and resigned her post as Director. MacDonald came in on a permanent capacity, hired by the King's School.

Oliver Hancock, who was appointed as a postgraduate organ scholar in 2008, has taken on a variety of roles during six years since the girls started, and it is perhaps due to his constant presence as a source of stability that the girls' choir survived a tumultuous beginning with changing directors.

### **2.5.1. Daily Life and Structure of the Choir**

The choir has scholarships for eighteen choristers in years 9 to 13, either three or four from each year, depending on how many top year leavers there are. The age span of the choir was an important aspect of its founding: the boy choristers sing from years 4 to 8, and the Cathedral and School were both keen that there should be no competition between the two groups. It was considered the best option to eliminate overlap in ages to facilitate that effort. Besides eliminating competition in terms of recruitment, there is no social competition, which is easily understood. In what way would a group of teenage girls compare themselves, favourably or otherwise, to a group of little boys? The two choirs have no interaction in or out of school, and know very little about the other group.

The girl choristers are all required to board, and each receives a 33% reduction in her boarding and singing lesson fees. All girl choristers live together in Etheldreda House, which is the residence of the girls' choir only. They spend nearly every hour of the day together.

The impact of the boarding requirement on these girls is pervasive: there is no clique-behaviour in this group that one might find in another group of girls of this age. They live together, study together and sing together with no observable animosity, exclusivity or negativity in the social structure; the director confirms that such occurrences are extremely rare. This close bond, paired with the friendly nature of Sarah MacDonald (the girls affectionately call her 'Mackey' when addressing her) leads to a productive and fun environment that encourages the girls to work hard and love what they do.



Despite the boarding aspect, the families of the girls are actively involved in the life of the choir and Cathedral. The King's School has a small catchment area of recruitment, and many families are local. Girls may go home to their families on weekends, with the proviso that they return to the boarding house the night before a morning rehearsal. Parents often attend Evensong services, and know MacDonald and Hancock, as well as the singing teachers and other school staff.

Due to the choir schedule of only two or three services per week, the girls are able to maintain a fairly regular school life as choristers in ECGC. They can do sport if they choose (though according to the director, they espouse a collective displeasure with house competitions), participate in clubs, drama, and other groups, and also sing in the larger school choir. They all play an instrument, or several instruments, and maintain high grades in their academic studies.

The girls sing only two or three of the eight choral services at the Cathedral, and this arrangement seems to be beneficial for all parties involved. Paul Trepte, Director of Music for the Cathedral Choir, would not relinquish more of the boys' services for the girls, and because the girls are older and have pressing academic responsibilities, it would be a struggle for them to take on any more singing.

The girls rehearse five mornings per week and sing on their own on Wednesday evensongs. Alternate Mondays they sing with the Cathedral lay clerks and have weekend service duties once per month. When they are not singing with the men, they sing treble-only repertoire.

### **2.5.2. In Rehearsal**

MacDonald divides her time between Ely and Selwyn College, Cambridge, where she is the Director of Music at the chapel there, the first woman to hold the post at any Oxbridge college.<sup>117</sup> Her experience is weighted heavily toward university-aged singers, though she has worked with younger choristers in the past. Due largely to her experience with Oxbridge choirs, she is remarkably suited to preparing the girls with the requisite knowledge and skills to sing a successful audition for entrance to university choirs. For MacDonald, preparing the girls to sing

---

<sup>117</sup> University of Cambridge, 'People in Chapel: Selwyn College', <http://www.sel.cam.ac.uk/selwyn-college/chapel-choir/people-chapel/> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

and continue their musical careers after Ely is a top priority, and one of the most important aspects of her job.

The girls often sing without the men and much of their repertoire is for soprano/treble only. Whilst this does reduce the possible repertoire available, for the director, the search for quality soprano-only repertoire is important. She prefers not to sacrifice the integrity of an SATB piece by only singing the top line, as some other choirs and directors choose to do.

Since MacDonald's appointment with ECGC, her focus on musicianship and especially independent music reading has set a very high standard for this choir. Because of her experience with undergraduate singers, she treats these choristers as she would treat an undergraduate choir, not as children. The process is still in its early stages, as she has only held the post for two years, but her goals of preparing the girls for further singing can be seen and heard in the choir.

All girls study with one of the school's three or four singing teachers. MacDonald is able to correspond with the teachers about the progress of individual girls or to ask that a certain skill is practised or a certain piece is worked through.

The girls' sound is distinctly non-treble; these are young sopranos, most are no longer trebles. It would be much easier to mistake the sound of this choir for a group of young women than a group of children. They have a warm, robust sound. It is not childlike and not yet fully matured. They have strong breath support and approximately half of the girls have, or are developing, a natural vibrato. In addition, they seem to be aware of their vocal range and are beginning to utilise chest, mixed, and head voice for different tone production, which is not a typical skill of younger singers. The visual juxtaposition of these choristers: women's bodies in school uniforms, wearing makeup but studying for school examinations is a striking parallel to the effect of the choir's sound.

Morning rehearsals run smoothly. The rehearsal room is in the lower ground floor of Etheldreda House; the girls need only walk downstairs from their dormitories. Stalls are arranged in a U shape around the piano. Girls are given stools to sit on, or they stand. Facing

the girls, the left side of the U shape is *decani*, and the right is *cantoris*. This also corresponds to their places in the quire when they sing in the Cathedral.

The tone of the rehearsals is generally relaxed; the director and assistant director treat the girls like undergraduates rather than children, and there is no spoon-feeding of notes. MacDonald and Hancock encourage teamwork amongst the girls; if a girl can't pitch an interval, maybe the next girl can try it, or the whole side can help her. They trust the girls to reach the bar they set quite high, and by treating the choristers as young adults instead of children, the girls learn quickly how to be independent young musicians.

With reading new music, MacDonald teaches the girls of ECGC the same way as she does her choir at Selwyn: jumping right in. They just sing through the piece, with no regard to the difficulty or the style, text, range, or rhythms. Some pieces they can read quite quickly, and some take more time. The girls are fonder of tuneful, 20<sup>th</sup> century, romantic-style pieces, 'cheesy' according to Hancock, and those pieces tend to read faster. Early music takes a bit more time, but the goal of teaching the girls to read the music faster is ever present.

MacDonald's conducting gesture is a mix of her North American symphonic conducting training and her acquired-on-the-job adapted techniques. Though erring on the rhythmic side, she can use a slightly more jaunty gesture for fast or precise sections of the music, or a little smoother for legato sections. Oliver Hancock is a skilled accompanist in rehearsals, sometimes evaluating sections of trickier tonality and bringing out other voice or accompaniment parts that help the girls stay grounded in their home key.

### **2.5.3. Recruitment and Audition**

MacDonald describes a rigorous recruitment process: 'we did a huge recruitment drive here this year. We got lots of advertisements and did newspapers and a couple of magazines and sent out thousands of our brochures to local schools'. She also recruited further afield to cathedral choirs that cap the girls' line after year 8, in the hopes that some girls may want to continue the cathedral choral experience where they are permitted to do so. She did not recruit from any cathedral that allows girls past year 9, however.

Despite the recruitment drive, in this particular year there were only six applicants, and only three were of a high enough standard for ECGC and MacDonald. Those three came from within the school, as the King's School is co-educational through all the school years. External applicants are often few and far between, according to MacDonald, not only for the choir but also for the school in general after year 9.

Prospective choristers fill in an application form, which includes information on their musical background, what level of music theory they have achieved in the Associated Boards tests; this is all to prepare MacDonald for what to expect of the girls in the audition. If they have achieved grade 4 or above, she will ask them more difficult questions in the audition, such as to name a key that she'll play on the piano, or to sing more difficult pieces of sight-reading. She selects choristers partly on their current skills and vocal qualities, but a large part of the selection criteria is how likely they are to learn to sight-read well. If they are bright and pick up concepts, melodies, rhythms quite quickly, MacDonald's experience has taught her that that singer will learn to read music with greater independence in a short amount of time.

#### **2.5.4. Hierarchy**

Within ECGC, there are no hierarchies, but in the school hierarchies there is a head of house for every boarding house. Because the choristers reside in Etheldreda alone, their school head of house takes on some leadership within the choir as well. When Louise Reid began the ECGC, she explicitly wanted no head choristers because of the competitive aspect. MacDonald has thought about whether a system of co-head choristers, one for decani and one for cantoris might work well, but not put forth any serious consideration or proposals for how to implement it.

The lack of a hierarchical system applies to the girls' placement on the row as well; MacDonald considers many more vocal factors than age ones when arranging the choristers. She looks for blend and range, and will try to disperse the year groups evenly, mostly so that both sides will be equally strong on repertoire such as the responses that are not rehearsed. If all the year 11s

are on one side, as has happened in the past, the other side may have fewer girls who know the repertoire from the previous years.

#### **2.5.5. Conclusion**

On its surface, Ely Cathedral's choral programme looks like many others: a line of boy choristers of the usual age range, and a line of girl choristers (who sing slightly less) of an older age range. The normal routine of evensongs and Sundays may look like others, but the structure of the choir is unique. It is important to note that the girl choristers are funded by the cathedral school rather than the cathedral itself. They are an entirely separate entity that alternates with the Cathedral Choir (men and boys).



## 2.6. Guildford Cathedral (visited 11-14 June 2011)

Guildford Cathedral, set atop Stag Hill, is one of England's more modern cathedrals. The diocese was founded in 1927, and the building itself not completed until 1961: the same year that the Cathedral choir was founded by then Director of Music, Barry Rose.<sup>118</sup> Today, the choir is directed by Katherine Dienes-Williams, a New Zealander and the first woman appointed to the highest musical role in a cathedral in England (pre-empting Sarah Baldock's appointment to Winchester Cathedral by two months).<sup>119</sup> Paul Provost, the sub-organist, assists Dienes-Williams in training the choir and playing the organ.

The Guildford Cathedral choir notionally consists of 20-25 girls and 20 boys, plus probationers for each group and six songmen who provide the alto, tenor and bass lines. Whilst the boy choristers are educated at Guildford Cathedral School, the girls are taken from a variety of different schools; in the 2009-2010 academic year there were six schools represented amongst the sixteen girl choristers, and two in home education.<sup>120</sup>

The girls' duties amount to a small fraction of the choral duties at Guildford Cathedral. They sing on Friday evensongs and have one Sunday duty, either the morning Eucharist and matins or the evening service. They rehearse on Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8:15 without the men, and again on Friday at 4:30, until the men arrive at 5:05 for a full rehearsal before the service at 5:30. Once or twice per term, their Sunday duty is replaced by a rehearsal with the director whilst the boys and men sing evensong under the direction of the sub-organist.

### 2.6.1. Recruitment and Audition

The girls enter the choir at year 5 and are required to stay until the end of year 11, with the option of staying to the end of school for the additional two years. Dienes-Williams recruits the girls on a rolling cycle. Because their education, tuition, and possible scholarship are not

---

<sup>118</sup> Guildford Cathedral, 'Previous Organists' <https://www.guildford-cathedral.org/music/organists/previous> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

<sup>119</sup> Dienes-Williams, Katherine. Interviewed by the author. 12 June 2011.

<sup>120</sup> *Unless otherwise indicated, the information in the remainder of this chapter and quotations of the director are derived from my interview with Katherine Dienes-Williams.*

affected by their choristership, as is the case with the boys, girls may be auditioned at any point in the year.

Guildford Cathedral Choir uses a multi-layered recruitment approach, starting with the 'Be a Chorister for a Day', which is for girls and boys in years 3-6, held in September every year. This event allows them to interact with the director and the sub-organist and experience singing in the Cathedral in a relaxed environment. Additionally, there is a leaflet drop at various schools, particularly at schools which previous choristers have attended. To a lesser extent, the Surrey Songsters, a local children's choir that Dienes-Williams directs outside of the Cathedral, is also recruitment target.

The largest recruitment tool is word-of-mouth. Many choristers have heard about the choir through friends who were already members, or the parents heard of the girl chorister opportunity and emailed the music department to ask if their daughter could possibly come to sing.

Recruitment at Guildford is never really over; it is a constant effort. In the words of the director, 'It's something you've got to work at constantly and it can't just be on one level, certainly not for us here in Guildford because of not having the choir school, and because you're relying on the good nature of parents to bring the children to the Cathedral constantly, and because there are so many different schools spread around the place. You have to have a different kind of approach.'

The director stresses the importance of flexibility in recruitment. She is always willing to take passionate young singers as they come, especially with the girl choristers, though with the boys it's a slightly more complicated method that involves the school. Due to the economic climate in the area and around the country in the last five years or so, she has found that people are moving in and out of the area because of parents' jobs. So whilst keeping an eye of the number of girls in each year to avoid a bulge or a shortage in any one year, with an ideal of five girls in each year, she is able to take new girl choristers at any point, providing they pass the audition. Or they may be given the opportunity to start the following September if they wish, provided they sing a successful audition.



In the audition process, Dienes-Williams invites the prospective choristers and their parents to spend fifteen minutes with her and the sub-organist. They use a series of vocal exercises to determine the type and quality of the voice and get an idea of the vocal range. They also use pitching exercises: they ask the candidate to sing notes back to them from the piano, or if this proves too difficult they can sing back a note which is sung to them instead. If it seems the child presents a reasonable level of aural skills from this point, they may be asked to sing the lower or higher of two notes played together, or sing the three notes of a chord played on the piano. Prospective choristers are asked to bring a piece to sing, though it is not a requirement, and they may choose to sing it. It could be a hymn or any song they know.

Many prospective choristers play at least one instrument, though this is not a prerequisite of the choir or their schooling for the boys or the girls. The director thinks it just comes with the choral territory: 'I think at some level I think if they want to be in the cathedral choir there seems to be a level of understanding that this involves a leap of faith into being a musician, if that makes sense, and all that goes with it. So perhaps some instrumental background might be an advantage.'

### **2.6.2. Hierarchy**

Within the choir, there are the normal levels of hierarchy: a head chorister and a deputy head chorister for both the girl choristers and the boy choristers. In the girl chorister ranks, the girls themselves vote for the head and deputy head chorister from the top year girls, and the director and the Cathedral Precentor have the overriding say on who is appointed. They are looking for a wide range of leadership skills, both social and musical; mostly this is not an issue because by the time the girls reach year 11 and are eligible for the top positions, they have already had six years in the choir and can mostly be counted on to be consistent in their leadership.

In the case of the boys the process is slightly different. The boys vote amongst themselves who in the top year will be the head and deputy head, but it is the Headmistress of the school rather than the Precentor who assists in the final decision, and the boys' leadership duties within the school are factored in. Dienes-Williams gives the example that in one year there was a boy who

was in the running to be both head boy at the school and head chorister within the choir, and it was decided that should he be voted as head chorister he would not be able to be head boy. As it happened, he was made deputy head chorister, and handled the two roles simultaneously with no problem.

The head chorister would be expected to be the director's second-in-command in many ways, during the rehearsals and outside of them. They would make sure that all the choristers' music was in order, the procession is lining up properly, and there is no chatting in the stalls. Though not expected to have achieved a specified associated board grade level in singing, they will have shown in their years a certain level of vocal leadership, will be confident in singing out, and will likely be familiar with the most of the repertoire. In addition the head chorister would be expected to take on the bulk of solo duties, particularly the longer or more difficult solos. Many of the smaller solos and verse work in renaissance repertoire are given to younger choristers to give them a chance to try out singing alone. But longer solos, which require more confidence, would likely be given to head choristers and more senior choristers.

### **2.6.3. Aims of the Choir**

For Dienes-Williams, the main purpose of the choir is to focus on the day-to-day life of Guildford Cathedral's music. 'I think that's a fundamental to me, just that every service counts, every note counts. To come in and do your best every day is important and rest is the gloss.' Whilst she is aware that the 'gloss' is important especially for young children, the main goal is to sing in Guildford. Tours are beneficial for morale and as a musical unit working towards that goal and making music in a different environment is unifying. Recordings are a similar morale enhancement if the finance is available. But for the director, these things are extra, and the life of the Cathedral is the primary function of the Guildford Cathedral Choir.

### **2.6.4. Music Teaching and Learning**

Within the Tuesday rehearsal time, the probationer girls are taken away to work separately with the sub-organist or the organ scholar, looking at the repertoire at a slightly slower pace to learn how to read it on their own. In addition, a vocal coach sees the girls for about ten minutes

either separately or in groups. This may be to work on a solo, or if a girl is having a particular technical or vocal production issue. The boys have theory tuition during their school hours, the director and sub-organist go to the school and teach them with the goal that the boy choristers will sit Associated Board exams. At the time of this research, there were plans to incorporate theory tuition into the girl choristers' routines, though it was not quite certain how that would work within the limited time the girls had.

Music learning in the girls' rehearsal is straightforward. With the advantage of half of the choir having more than three years of choral experience, the sight-reading skill level is generally high, and many pieces are 'eminently sight-readable'. 'In this case, the girls will simply open up the music and sing it, then the director or sub-organist, whoever is leading the rehearsal, will work through the piece in smaller sections. If it is a little more difficult, Dienes-Williams will play through on the piano first, or at least a few pages of the piece to give the girls an idea of what to expect. They may then sing the melody on a vowel. If it is rhythmically complex they sing it slower, and if it is in a foreign language they will likely sing through the first time on a neutral syllable before learning or reviewing the diction.

It is important to Dienes-Williams, to end the rehearsal with something the girls already know well, to give them confidence, especially if the learning in the rehearsal has gone slowly or is particularly stressful. At the end of the Tuesday rehearsal, the girl choristers take turns sharing a good thing that has happened to them in the week. Dienes-Williams explains the motive behind this activity: 'It's a good unifying thing to do because they come from all these different schools and a very broad age range and mix of hormones... so it might be "I got an A\* in my biology exam", or "I got a guinea pig" or "my dad managed to get out of Qatar on a visa so he's coming home", or "I did really well on my music exam" or "I went swimming"'.

In her work with the girls, the director says an aspect which surprises her is how difficult it is to persuade the girls that they are doing well. Perhaps due to the older age range and the particular hormones of teenage girls, this group is quite self-deprecating. It is a mindset Dienes-Williams is trying to overturn. If they read a piece for the first time and make mistakes, they feel horribly about it, and blame themselves, even if their sight-reading has greatly improved. To combat this, the director tries to approach the rehearsal with a high level of emotional

intelligence. In her words, 'with girls you have to be a negotiator and facilitator and a reconciler and an enthuser'. Based on the commitment these girls show, and obvious joy they find in singing together, the director has been successful in her task.

### **2.6.5. Conclusion**

The first woman to take on the highest musical post in any English Cathedral ably leads Guildford's Cathedral Choir in leading the music for daily worship in the cathedral. Though the choir's structure is slightly lop-sided, with a single gender choir school for the boys - with the usual pattern of morning rehearsal and integrated music theory tuition - and a voluntary system for the girls, the choir is highly successful. The girl choristers are both numerous and dedicated and perform to a high standard expected of a cathedral choir; they are no sidelined fringe chorus. Katherine Dienes-Williams' focus on a positive choral experience has clearly paid off with happy choristers, keen for a challenge, and committed to their duty.

## 2.7. Liverpool Cathedral (visited 8-10 December 2010)

Like Guildford, Liverpool Cathedral is a 20<sup>th</sup>-century construction. It is the largest cathedral in the north of Europe, and famously shares the city of Liverpool with the modern Catholic Cathedral, Liverpool Metropolitan. The Cathedral Church of Christ in Liverpool was completed in 1978, the Giles Gilbert Scott design is the fifth largest cathedral in the world, and second only to the Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York City as the largest Anglican church.<sup>121</sup> It measures 189 metres in length and 331 metres in height.<sup>122</sup> The interior seems as vast as space itself; the Lady Chapel alone rivals some cathedrals in grandiosity.

Of course as a modern cathedral, this building does not claim any ancient traditions harking back to medieval times, but they have been the home of a choir of men and boys since 1904, when the foundations of the cathedral were laid.<sup>123</sup>

This Cathedral is a house of daily worship in this large city; Morning Prayer and Eucharist are held Monday through Saturday. Choral Evensong is led by the choir every day but Wednesday. On Sundays, the choir sings one morning and one evening service.<sup>124</sup>

### 2.7.1. The Choir

Canon Precentor Myles Davies and the Director of Music, David Poulter, lead the Cathedral's music and liturgy department. Poulter, along with the Associate Organist, Daniel Bishop, trains the Cathedral choir, consisting of twelve lay clerks who sing the alto, tenor and bass lines, and approximately fifty choristers in any one year – half of girls and half of boys.<sup>125</sup>

The choir sings seven services weekly, with Wednesday as a dumb day. The boys and girls alternate service responsibilities, although the proportion is weighted heavily toward the boys.

---

<sup>121</sup> Quirk, H.E., *The Living Cathedral: St. John the Divine: A History and Guide* (New York: Crossroad, 1993). pp. 15-16.

<sup>122</sup> English Heritage, 'Liverpool Cathedral List Entry: 1361681', <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1361681> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Liverpool Cathedral, 'Rehearsals & Services', <http://www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk/about/the-choir/choristers.aspx> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

<sup>125</sup> Poulter, David. Interviewed by the author. 9 December 2010.

Here, the boys are, in the director's words, 'top dogs'.<sup>126</sup> The girl choristers are very much the 'second choir' and this was a deliberate goal from the outset.

The girl choristers were introduced here in 2004 to celebrate the centenary of the Cathedral's foundation, and were called the Centenary Choir. Initially, this choir was created for a one-off celebratory period, and was not intended to carry on. But Cathedral's chapter wished them to carry on, and carry on they did, as many girls enjoyed the experience.

The lay clerks were not initially supportive; in Poulter's words, they were 'suspicious'. In the first two years of the girls' choir, the new choristers were breathy and hesitant, and they sounded nothing like the boys. The lay clerks were more acclimatised to singing with the boys, who were gutsy and made a tremendous sound. The newcomers were not welcomed fully until they started to prove their potential.

This happened around two or three years into the start of the girls' line, when Poulter took his post as Director of Music. He worked hard in the early days of his post to train the tone the girls were making: to form tall vowels, support the sound properly with the breath. The girls were soon folded into the Cathedral Choir; they could rightly be called choristers as part of the cathedral's permanent musical offerings.

### 2.7.2. Apprehensions

There was still a worry as to how the boys would continue if they were not singing daily; a century of tradition is still enough to cause some apprehension at the thought of change. Would the boys feel less important and lose interest in the choir and the Cathedral? Would they lose their skills built up after so many years of daily singing, or forget repertoire if they sing it less often? Would they begin to see choir as less of a duty and more of an after-school club, resulting in poor behaviour and loss of focus on the work at hand?

Liverpool Cathedral addresses these problems by maintaining the boys' line as the primary choir. The girls sing significantly fewer services than the boys. In an average term, each team

---

<sup>126</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the information in the remainder of this chapter and quotations of the director are derived from my interview with David Poulter.

will sing nine Sundays, that is either one service on the Sunday or both. Of the weekday services, the boys will sing 39 per term, whilst the girls sing only 15. During Advent, the girls sing an extra service per week, but for most the year, they have two or three services per week to the boys' five or six.

The normal rota of singing is as follows:<sup>127</sup>

**Table 9: Liverpool Cathedral Chorister Schedule**

	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
<b>Monday</b>	Rehearsal 4:00-6:00 (Evensong alternate weeks, 5:30-6:00)	Rehearsal 4:00-6:00 (Evensong alternate weeks, 5:30-6:00)
<b>Tuesday</b>	Rehearsal 4:00-5:30 Evensong 5:30-6:00	
<b>Wednesday</b>	DUMB DAY	DUMB DAY
<b>Thursday</b>		Rehearsal 4:00-5:30 Evensong 5:30-6:00
<b>Friday</b>	Rehearsal 4:00-5:30 Evensong 5:30-6:00	
<b>Saturday</b>	Rehearsal 1:15-3:00 Evensong 3:00-3:45	
<b>Sunday</b>	Alternate weeks: Rehearsal 9:00-10:30 Eucharist 1:30-11:45 Rehearsal 1:30-3:00 Evensong 3:00-4:00	Alternate weeks: Rehearsal 9:00-10:30 Eucharist 1:30-11:45 Rehearsal 1:30-3:00 Evensong 3:00-4:00

Boy probationers have a dedicated rehearsal on Saturday from 12:30-1:15, before the choristers arrive, and also on Sunday from 1:00-4:00. Girl probationers have a rehearsal from 1:00-4:00 on Sunday and Thursday from 4:00-6:00.<sup>128</sup>

### 2.7.3. Age Range and Recruitment

Liverpool Cathedral has no choir school; its choristers are drawn from various schools around the city. The Cathedral has benefitted greatly from the *Sing Up!* programme sponsored by the government. This programme gave cathedrals funding to take some choristers out to schools

<sup>127</sup> Liverpool Cathedral, 'Rehearsals & Services', <http://www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk/about/the-choir/choristers.aspx> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

where little music making takes place. The choristers sing with the students at an assembly-style master class led by the Cathedral's music director. Poulter takes leaflets about the Cathedral Choir to every school they visit, and has drawn a large proportion of his choristers from this method; it has been the main focus of their recruitment efforts.

*Sing Up!* was unfortunately only funded for a total of five years, from January 2007, phasing out funding several years ahead of the final cut-off of March 2011. Several cathedrals, Liverpool among them, have decided to continue and fund the programme themselves. As of December 2011, Liverpool Cathedral was considering hiring a member of staff exclusively for the purpose.

Boys and girls are recruited from age eight – generally in year 4 at school; boys stay in the choir until their voice breaks, around age twelve or thirteen (year 8 or 9) whilst girls can stay until age sixteen. When their voices break, the boys can join the Cathedral's Cross Guild and acolyte for cathedral services. It is an opportunity for the boys to remain a part of cathedral life and stay in touch with their choir friends who may go to different schools. When the girls reach sixteen there is a chance they will be invited to stay on in the choir for another two years, as they will still be sopranos. This is on a case-by-case basis. Alternately they can also join the Cross Guild.

Poulter explained that he could, and might prefer, to recruit the girls from age ten rather than eight, but because most of the recruiting happens in the *Sing Up!* school visits, he must recruit the boys and girls from the same age as a matter of the schools' policies.

#### **2.7.4. Hierarchies**

The boys' line and the girls' line have very little interaction with each other, and as such they have their own independent hierarchical systems. In the girls' line there is a head chorister and deputy head; they are both in the final year in the choir, aged fifteen or sixteen.

In rehearsals and services, the girls are arranged in two rows on either side of Poulter; the *decani* and *cantoris* lines have more senior choristers in between younger ones – one younger girl on either side of an older girl. The older ones help the younger ones regularly throughout the



rehearsal, pointing in their music, helping them find the right piece, or encouraging them to answer a question if they know it. This system of spreading the older girls among the younger ones creates built-in semi-chorus groups. Each line of ten girls can be split into two groups of five, with a mix of older and younger girls in each.

The influence of the more senior girls on the younger ones is very strong in this group, as evidenced by a situation occurring during my period of research here. According to the director, the girls had wanted to have more services per week, a constant complaint they held for several years, and one shared by the girls' parents who regularly ask for the girls to alternate Saturday services with the boys. But the influence of the older girls in this particular group changed that; in 2011 the head chorister and deputy head were worried about exams and vocalised their feelings that choir was taking too much of their time. The mood spread to the younger girls quickly, and soon they were all feeling like two services amount to one too many.

#### **2.7.5. Social and Musical Differences**

According to the director, the girls and the boys are completely different species of chorister – in terms of learning, responsiveness, social tendencies, and approach to music.

‘Generally I find that the boys want to be challenged. They want to be goaded. You have to pep them up and get them to perform and they’re very competitive. The girls are not. The girls basically don’t like to be confronted, don’t like to be challenged, don’t like to be embarrassed for risk of failure... The boys are more willing to take risks, whether they can do it or not, they want to get stuck in. It’s the testosterone isn’t it? The girls in rehearsal are very quiet, unless they’re singing it’s just chatting. The boys are mischievous and naughty and badly behaved, and constantly you have to be on top of them, eyeballing them, keeping them busy. The girls you can let them relax a minute, very calm.’

Both the boys and the girls in rehearsal can be very focused, with the girls it happens naturally, they may chat for a few seconds but it seems very easy to get their attention to the next piece.

With the boys, those few seconds aren’t given at all, their focus must remain constant throughout the rehearsal, and on the whole they do fulfil that expectation set for them.

The girls are the better sight-readers, according to the director. He attributes it to the older girls who are more confident and have been choristers for more years; the boys don’t have that advantage.

The tone is very different between these two groups. In the director's own words:

'The boys' [tone] is quite a strident, well-focused sound. The girls, it's not breathy, but it's quieter. It doesn't fill the building in the same way... With the girls its generally *mp* or *mf*, the excitement level is about the same, about middle. They never really rise to the occasion and excite you; it's very rarely bored. With the boys it's either exciting or it's incredibly bored and there's hardly anything in the middle. Volume-wise, the boys tend to sing loudly, it's very difficult to control them'.

Though a very different set a challenges for both, it creates an interesting sound for the occasions when the two groups are combined (Christmas and Easter, typically). The director likens it to an organist choosing stops: a diapason and a flute are both nice sounds, and unique and lovely in their own way. But when you combine them it's entirely different and can be an exciting blend.

#### **2.7.6. Remunerations**

All choristers are paid a stipend of £100 per term towards instrument lessons. Additionally there is funding available for a need-based stipend of £100 per term to cover transportation costs to and from the cathedral.

In Poulter's opinion the best remunerations they offer is a good musical education. All the choristers are taught musical theory, with the idea of being able to reach Associated Boards grade 5 by the end of their time in choir. Additionally the choristers are all given vocal tuition – sometimes taken in small groups during rehearsals or individually to work on solos. They also go on a tour every year, paid for by the cathedral. Besides this, says, Poulter, there is the opportunity to sing in one of the largest cathedrals in the world, sing solos in that space even, which is quite a hefty reward in its own right.

#### **2.7.7. Music Teaching and Learning**

Depending on how much time he has in the rehearsal, Poulter will introduce a piece of music by talking about the composer, talking about the text (giving some extra time to talk about

translation if in latin), and introducing the choristers to the key. He might play the first note, then pick a chorister to sing the next one and identify the interval, and go one for a phrase or two in that way.

If pressed for time, they might end up just reading through it. But then, sometimes it is just spoon-feeding the notes to them, as can happen from time to time if the notes need to be learnt faster than they can be sight-read.

### **2.7.8. Parental Involvement**

As in any cathedral where choristers come from different schools rather than an on-site choir school, the parents have a significant role in the operation of the choir. They must transport their children to and from, and also maintain a rota of responsibilities. There is one choir dad who is the appointed male supervisor (a volunteer position) and a choir mum who is the female supervisor, then other parents are added to help with things like break times, shepherding the choristers through the cathedral, waiting whilst parents pick the choristers up after rehearsal, and the like. They also have a support group, and raise money through bake-sales and similar type events for fun activities for the choir.

Although the practical role of the boy choristers and girl choristers at the cathedral are quite different, and they are perceived as different entities (if not in name), it is a system that works well for these circumstances. When asked how the girls perceive their role in relation to the boys here, or in the context of girl choristers in cathedrals around the country, he says 'I think they're equal now, I don't think it's an issue. I don't think they think of the history of it all, I think girls join because they just love singing. They just want to do what the boys are doing; the fact that the boys have been doing it for hundreds of years is not relevant to them is it?'

### **2.7.9. Conclusion**

Though Liverpool Cathedral's boy choristers are 'top dogs', the girls are dedicated and enjoy the role they play at Liverpool. They come from all over the city for little monetary gain, but one can observe that the reward is the opportunity to sing in this vast cathedral. The girls are

focused and mature, committed and very bright, they absorb music in vast quantities and quickly earned a place in the cathedral's choir and the respect of their musical colleagues.

## 2.8. Norwich Cathedral (visited 26-28 Feb 2013)

Norwich Cathedral, dedicated to the Holy and Undivided Trinity is among the oldest foundations in England. Completed in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, much of the building remains unaltered since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Containing the second largest cloister in the country, decorated with over 1000 bosses, this cathedral boasts the largest number of residents housed in its close than any other cathedral in Europe.

The Dean, along with the chapter, leads the daily operation of Norwich Cathedral. This post, soon to be taken up by Jane Hedges, has been held by the Precentor and Vice Dean, Jeremy Haselock. In his capacity as Precentor, he is the line manager of the music and liturgy at the cathedral. The Director of Music, Ashley Grote, appointed in 2012, trains the choir, assisted on the organ by David Dunnett who stepped down from his post as Acting Director of Music to focus on the organ playing.

### 2.8.1. The Choir

Notionally, the choir has places for 20 boy choristers and 24 girl choristers, though Ashley Grote aims for 20 of each. At time of research, there were only seventeen girls.<sup>129</sup> The boys hold choral scholarship to Norwich Cathedral School, so the number of places is limited to 20 due to funding. The girl choristers, however, constitute a voluntary line. So long as the year groups remain relatively even, the director can, in theory, take as many girls as will fit in the choir stalls.<sup>130</sup>

The girls sing one weekly evensong, on a Tuesday, and alternate singing alone and singing with the men. They also sing one Sunday Eucharist per term. They rehearse on a Saturday morning and on Tuesday before Evensong. After their evensong duty, they are provided with a light dinner and rehearse for a further hour.

---

<sup>129</sup> Grote, Ashley. Interviewed by the author. 26 February 2013.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

The girl choristers span from age eleven to age eighteen, and are educated at various local schools. Their line is completely voluntary: there is no monetary stipend or financial remuneration for the girls in any form. As of spring 2013, Ashley Grote had laid plans for the girls to receive singing tuition in groups, gradually moving to individual lessons twice per term for each girl.<sup>131</sup>

### 2.8.2. Girls' Choir Beginnings

The girls' line was founded as a separate choir, not a part of the foundation of the cathedral, in 1995. It was a voluntary group, as it is today, and of the same age span of older girls. They were in large part a choir intended for going out: they sang concerts and outreach events, and if they sang a service it was in another church in the diocese. Indeed they were created to be almost a diocesan choir that was based in Norwich rather than a choir for the cathedral.<sup>132</sup> Their robes, a bright blue rather than the Cathedral choir's red cassock and surplice, were intended to represent not the cathedral's chosen colours but the background of the diocesan shield.<sup>133</sup>

When Jeremy Haselock arrived in Norwich in 1999 as Precentor, the girls already had a very good reputation for excellence in the quality of their singing. He altered the arrangement of the girls choir to integrate them more fully into the life of the cathedral, re-establishing their role in the worship of the cathedral. He gave them a weekly singing duty, and they are included in larger services with the boys (e.g. Christmas, Easter, Holy Week, confirmations, ordinations), and sometimes they will take on a service on their own without the boys.

Haselock was very clear, however, in stating that Norwich Cathedral Choir is a male voice choir. The girls are not integrated to the extent that they are part of the cathedral choir, but they are indeed a part of the life of the cathedral. In his own words:

'I looked at other cathedral choirs, I looked at Salisbury and York Minster's decision to bring girls in right at the very bottom and just treat them as they were choristers and thought this is not going to work here... It's very important that the two sections of the whole choir maintain their identity because they're a different age group, the girls, they

---

<sup>131</sup> Grote, Ashley. Interviewed by the author. 26 February 2013.

<sup>132</sup> Haselock, Jeremy. Interviewed by the author. 27 February 2013.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

sound and function in a very complimentary way. But they're regarded just as normal and ordinary part of the cathedral scene.'

### 2.8.3. Recruitment

Because the boys' line and the girls' line operate as completely separate entities, recruitment happens in entirely different ways for the boys and girls. The boys go through a more formal process, tied to the school admissions because of the scholarship provided.<sup>134</sup> The school pays 50% of each boys' tuition for their minimum five years in the choir from years 4 to 8; the boys stay in the school to age eighteen though, and in some cases if a boy's voice has not broken, they may sing another year in the choir, for which their scholarship stays in place.

The headmaster and the director of music have a say in the admission of choristers, through ultimately, Grote cannot choose a boy who does not meet the academic standard of the school. If two boys are on equal standing academically, however, Grote might have a large say on who will be chosen if one has more potential for a choristership.

The school recruits the boy choristers alongside their own recruitment activities. At the school's open days, parents are given the opportunity to ask about chorister places, and leaflets are sent to the 130 local primary schools about the choral opportunity at Norwich Cathedral. Grote sees parents and prospective boy choristers throughout the year on an informal basis, and can give a trial audition and let the parents know whether their boy has a real chance of passing the formal audition when the time comes.

Although Norwich is fairly isolated, the director has not experienced too much trouble in recruiting for boys. For the usual 20 places, he expressed he has several candidates for each, and all with potential; he has the luxury of some choice. The isolation works in his advantage here: the closest cathedral is Ely, more than an hour and a half away. If the parents want their son to be a chorister their choice is Norwich or to send their child away to board.

---

<sup>134</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the information in the remainder of this chapter and quotations of the director are derived from my interview with Ashley Grote.

For the girls, recruitment is largely by word of mouth. The seventeen girls represent five or six schools, and the best recruitment they have is the girls telling their musical friends at school to come along and join. Grote also writes letters and sends recruitment literature to around 100 schools. Girls audition informally, and can enter in any year. If a girl has had a little musical experience already, she could notionally enter even at age seventeen to sing just one year. Normally girls will enter the choir around age twelve and then build up the musical skills throughout their six or seven years in the choir.

Because the girl choristers are on a voluntary basis, there is less pressure in certain situations. For example if a girl must leave the choir to prioritise time for school exams, then she would simply leave. Or if Grote found it necessary to remove a girl from the choir because she was being consistently disruptive, she would not need to also leave the school and renege on a scholarship arrangement. Grote can also be more flexible with how many girls he takes: 19 in one year is fine, as is 24 the following year, funding has no impact on that recruitment aspect.

In the girls' recruitment, unlike the boys', Grote attempts to recruit an even spread of standards, rather than certain number of girls in each year:

'With the girls I think the discrepancy of standard between the year groups is not so marked. When you've got boys aged 8 to 13, they start knowing nothing, then in a sense they make a clear progression throughout each year. And it is the case that the boys in the top year are the strongest and the boys in the next year down are the next strongest and soon a so forth as a general rule. The difference between a boy who's 13 and a boy who's 8 in their standard knowledge and capability is massive. The difference between a girl who's 17 and a girl who's 15, or a girl who is 18 and a girl who is 16, it just depends on the girl. It might be that there's a girl who's done a lot of music from an early age and by the time she's 15 is already singing very fluently and already playing 3 instruments or one instrument at grade 8 and actually is far better than an 18 year old who hasn't done much singing'.

#### **2.8.4. Hierarchy**

The girl choristers have a head and a deputy head, both in the top years – aged seventeen or eighteen. Their duties are largely pastoral: Grote can ask a head chorister to check all the girls are presentable for a service, with hair and jewellery to the correct standard. They may go and check on a younger chorister if the director thinks they might be feeling unwell. The director



can of course do these things himself, but in this group of adolescent girls, he feels these matters are sometimes best handled by a colleague on the girls' own level.

Because the boys are younger, those sorts of situations are all handled by Grote himself in a more teacher-pupil relationship. He can tell off a boy who is misbehaving, or instruct a boy to tidy his appearance before a service. In his own words: 'I'm much more like a schoolmaster with how I approach the boys than with the girls. Three reasons: a) because [the girls are] older b) because they're volunteers and c) because they're young women and not little boys'.

### **2.8.5. Music Teaching and Learning**

The boys and the girls learn music in much the same ways. Generally Grote will open up the music and give a basic feel for the piece on the piano, then they'll sing through it a bit slower than tempo. They'll then work through phrase by phrase, starting from the end of the piece. Grote uses this method because it is how he learnt music as a chorister at King's College, Cambridge, and has found it a useful method when learning organ repertoire as well.

### **2.8.6. Aims of the Choir**

The director is still new to his post, only appointed in autumn of 2012, and has many long and short term goals. Overall, he believes, the set-up of the choir is good, the proportion of services that the boys and girls sing works for them, and to alter it would create much greater problems involving the boy choristers' scholarships. The main thing is just to make what is already 'good' better.

Improving the music theory tuition of all the choristers, as well as vocal tuition for the girls is on the list for musical goals. He also aims to improve the consistency of the boys' standard across the year groups. To an extent this will involve raising the standard of rehearsals, teaching more of music theory as time permits, but also setting project goals.

Grote is keen to engage the choir in tours, recordings, broadcasts, new work commissions and concerts on a more regular basis, and believes this will improve the choir in a way that the normal routine of rehearsals and services might not do.

‘I think in turn these types of projects are real incentives for the choir to get better. In some ways it’s a leap of faith because I don’t think you can wait until the choir is good enough to take projects on, because in theory you could be waiting forever. So whilst being cautious and realistic, next spring we’ll make a CD and I’ll make sure the choir is good enough to do this by next February. It’s a fine balancing act. If they don’t have any of these exciting things then they’re not going to have the incentive to get better. There are the obvious things about raising the profile and having a record of what the choir is like at a certain point, but that’s almost a secondary point to the more important issue of the choir preparing for a CD recording: they’re going to get better by going through the process’.

### **2.8.7. Conclusion**

Prior to Ashley Grote’s appointment, the girl choristers at Norwich Cathedral were only tenuously connected to the cathedral choir. They were primarily a choir to represent the cathedral in the diocese, not as much in the cathedral itself. The slight alteration to the structure of the choir and the change in personnel has brought them closer to home, and to their role within the cathedral itself. The girls are incredibly bright and skilled technically - they can sight read quickly and produce a healthy tone. Ashley Grote, though new to the post, has a lot of enthusiasm and goals for the choir, and will surely raise the standard here.

## 2.9. Exeter Cathedral (visited 4-7 March 2011)

The Cathedral Church of Saint Peter in Exeter, notable for its uninterrupted vaulted ceiling - the longest in England - shares not only its patronal saint, but also two Deans with York Minster. Keith Jones, Dean of Exeter from 1996 to 2004 moved on to become Dean of York until 2012. The current Dean of Exeter, Jonathan Draper, was Canon Theologian at York from 2000 to 2012.

The building, completed by 1400, began in the Norman style in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but by the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the yet-unfinished building was already out-dated.<sup>135</sup> It was rebuilt in the decorated gothic style but retained some structural features of its original Norman design. The cathedral suffered some damage in the dissolution of the monasteries, but as it was not a monastic foundation, it fared better than other cathedrals in the country. The Civil War resulted in the destruction of the cloisters. Exeter Cathedral then withstood a direct hit in World War II in an air raid, and the Chapel of St James was demolished. Luckily, the attack was not entirely unexpected and many of the treasures of the cathedral had already been stored away safely.<sup>136</sup>

Exeter shares a common purpose as a house of worship with all the cathedrals here. And like so many other cathedrals the choir leads the music that propels much of the worship. The Precentor, Carl Turner, installed in 2001, leads the liturgy and music department and works closely with Andrew Millington, the Director of the Cathedral Choir, and Stephen Tanner the Assistant Organist and Director of the Girls Choir.<sup>137</sup> The Exeter Cathedral Choir operates as a single unit under one name, but has two different directors. Millington directs the boys and accompanies for the girls, and Stephen Tanner directs the girls.

### 2.9.1. History of the Girls Choir

In the mid-1990s, the system of Cathedral Schools and Cathedral Choirs was rapidly changing, and Exeter Cathedral went through the changes of the time as did so many others. Schools

---

<sup>135</sup> J. Harvey, *Cathedrals of England and Wales* (London: Batsford, 1974) p. 156.

<sup>136</sup> Exeter Cathedral, 'The Cathedral Church of St Peter in Exeter' (Leaflet) 2010.

<sup>137</sup> Exeter Cathedral, 'Community: Our People', <http://www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk/communities/people/chapter-members.ashx> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).

round the country – not only independent schools – were becoming co-educational, and from a financial perspective, this was beneficial. Exeter Cathedral Choir School found itself in the position to become co-educational in light of floundering funding and recruitment both for the choir itself and the school.<sup>138</sup>

This decision coincided with the first wave of cathedrals integrating girl choristers into their choirs. For Stephen Tanner, that move for Exeter made sense: ‘If we were going to go co-ed as a choir school, because a choir school is what we are first and foremost, then it was a very obvious move to go down the girl chorister route. And that of course did result in a big input of girls in the first instance, really good numbers – there was a lot of interest!’<sup>139</sup> The Dean and chapter of Exeter Cathedral were on board with the plan, and the girl chorister line started as the school set off as a co-educational institution.

The director of music at the time, Lucian Nethsinga, was somewhat sceptical, and agreed to the dual line of choristers with the caveat that he should have very little to do with them. Stephen Tanner, already head of music at the school, was put in charge of the girls’ line. When Andrew Millington replaced Nethsinga in 1999, the system was already in place and he, like his predecessor did not step in to train the girls, although, according to Tanner, he does consider them a connected part of the cathedral choir. Millington’s views on how this system began are that it was practical:

‘I sort of inherited that because [Tanner] was already here and doing the girls’ choir when I came and my predecessor was director of the boys. I could have changed it but I felt personally I would rather work constantly with one set of children. If it’s pick and mix I think it’s hard to keep that daily... I know exactly where the boys are with learning music and the same with Stephen and the girls. Sometimes it happens that the Director of Music with his Assistant takes the whole lot and that can work well too. So it just depends on the local circumstances and what’s happened before and what suits you. Not to say there’s a right way or wrong way of doing it’.<sup>140</sup>

---

<sup>138</sup> Tanner, Stephen. Interviewed by the author. 5 February 2011.

<sup>139</sup> *Unless otherwise indicated, the information in the remainder of this chapter and quotations of the director are derived from my interview with Stephen Tanner.*

<sup>140</sup> Millington, Andrew. Interviewed by the author. 5 March 2011.

### 2.9.2. Choristership

Stephen Tanner is keen to stress that the girl choristers at Exeter enjoy all the benefits of choristership that the boys have for centuries, and that was an important goal in the foundation of the line. The girls sing three times a week, to the boys' four or five, but generally have the same experience as the boys: they are choral specialists at the choir school, experience the repertoire, sing with the men, occasionally sing on their own, make recordings and do broadcasts and take tours in equal turns with the boys. In Stephen Tanner's words:

'There are a lot of places where the girls don't get nearly as many opportunities as they do here. There are plenty of other places where they do, but I think particularly in the smaller cathedrals they appear a little bit pushed to one side. And they may be achieving high standards but they're probably only meeting once a week, and they're probably only singing one service a week and they're probably tucked away on a dark Thursday evening and they may not get the opportunity to sing with the men. So their experience in my opinion is limited in that point of view. I don't think they get the full chorister experience there that you do in a place like this.'

Exeter Cathedral Choir is comprised of around 36 choristers, notionally eighteen each of girls and boys. They are all aged between seven and thirteen and receive scholarships, albeit small ones, to attend Exeter Cathedral Choir School. The boy and girl choristers are equally members of the Cathedral Choir, but have separate directors: the boys directed by Andrew Millington, the Director of Music for the Cathedral, and the girls directed by Stephen Tanner, Director of School Music and Girl Choristers and Assistant Organist at the Cathedral.

The girl choristers began singing roughly once per month, moving toward once per week. The process of acquiring the repertoire and skills to take on their current load of three services weekly took three or four years. The current chorister schedule is as follows:<sup>141</sup>

---

<sup>141</sup> Exeter Cathedral, 'Be a Chorister For Real', [http://www.exetercs.org/\\_assets/pdf/chorister/14.10.14voicetrials2014.pdf](http://www.exetercs.org/_assets/pdf/chorister/14.10.14voicetrials2014.pdf) (accessed 4 May 2015).

Table 10: Exeter Cathedral Chorister Schedule\*

	Boys	Girls
<b>Monday</b>	Rehearsal 8:20 - 9:00am	Rehearsal 8:20 - 9:00am Rehearsal/Evensong 4:30 - 6:15
<b>Tuesday</b>	Rehearsal 8:20 - 9:00am Rehearsal/Evensong 4:30 - 6:15	Rehearsal 8:20 - 9:00am
<b>Wednesday</b>	DUMB DAY	DUMB DAY
<b>Thursday</b>	Rehearsal 8:20 - 9:00am Rehearsal/Evensong 4:30 - 6:15	Rehearsal 8:20 - 9:00am
<b>Friday</b>	Rehearsal 8:20 - 9:00am Alternate weeks: Rehearsal/Evensong 4:30 - 6:15	Rehearsal 8:20 - 9:00am Alternate weeks: Rehearsal/Evensong 4:30 - 6:15
<b>Saturday</b>	Alternate weeks: Rehearsal/Evensong 3:00-5:00pm	Alternate weeks: Rehearsal/Evensong 3:00-5:00pm
<b>Sunday</b>	Alternate weeks: Rehearsal/Eucharist 9:00am Rehearsal/Evensong 3:00pm	Alternate weeks: Rehearsal/Eucharist 9:00am Rehearsal/Evensong 3:00pm

\*Boys and girls will typically alternate weekends. The group of chorister with a free Saturday/Sunday will generally be on duty for the Friday service.<sup>142</sup>

The choristers are set apart in a visual sense of their attire: the boys wear the widely-used red cassock and white surplice and the girls wear a red cassock (slightly different in style from the boys' cassock) with a white tabard that has the cathedral crest embroidered on. When the two groups do sing together for larger services, they look like a unified group, but maintain a sense of identity. It also means that when the girls sing with the men, they coordinate well, and when the whole choir sings a concert or a non-worship event, they wear only the red part of their vestment.

### 2.9.3. Music Teaching and Learning

Tanner begins teaching new repertoire with talk, and he stresses the background of pieces, the theory, and teaching the girls to think critically about the written music before approaching it:

'One of the things I really try to do is get them as much as possible to understand the theory that they're looking at and to take information off the page. So I'll point things

<sup>142</sup> Exeter Cathedral, 'Be a Chorister For Real', [http://www.exetercs.org/\\_assets/pdf/chorister/14.10.14voicetrials2014.pdf](http://www.exetercs.org/_assets/pdf/chorister/14.10.14voicetrials2014.pdf) (accessed 4 May 2015).

out, and we'll look at the score, the layout, if it's double choir, making sure they're reading the right thing, I might talk a little bit about the piece, what occasion we're likely to be doing this for, if we're doing it for a concert, why we're learning it, what the particular mood or style is. I might just give them a bit of background about why we're learning it. I'll probably play them a few bars to get them a feel for the style and kind of start them off. But I'll encourage them to read as much as possible, with piano support'.

When they move on to singing, he will let them sing through maybe two or three pages, and then set it aside for the next day. On day two, they review the section they already learned, then go further. Sometimes Tanner will use the same process but start backwards, and work towards the start of the piece. On average, a piece can be learned and polished easily in two weeks.

In choosing repertoire, Tanner is conscious of the proclivity to boredom that some repertoire can have for this age of choristers. He intersperses the classic repertoire and the earlier pieces with new works and more modern pieces to keep the choristers – and the congregation – interested.

#### **2.9.4. Hierarchies**

Exeter Cathedral abolished the system of head choristers for boys and girls around 2004 due to jealousies and bullying amongst the choristers and even the parents. Currently all the year 8 choristers wear ribbons that indicate a senior status, and are all expected to set the example for the younger, less experienced choristers both musically and socially. Tanner is constantly reminding the senior girls to be model choristers.

Tanner attributes the familial feel of the girls' line to the lack of head choristers. He treats the choristers like young adults, and the seniors like the big sisters of the group. He brings in treats from time to time if they've all been doing very well. He keeps in touch with the choristers after they leave the choir, and some he considers to be good friends after some years out of the school and the choir.

#### **2.9.5. Repertoire**

As Millington explains, there is a separate 'corpus of repertoire' for the boys and the girls, with only enough overlap so that the two groups can be combined on the occasions where they must

sing a service together.<sup>143</sup> One reason for this is the avoid duplication for the men, who sing under both the boys and the girls; their repertoire is effectively double that of either set of choristers.<sup>144</sup>

The boy choristers have a lot of the classic choral repertoire – Howells, Stanford, Bairstow, and similar; not very many pieces were taken from them when the girls' line was started. But the girls do have a few of the classic pieces.<sup>145</sup> They mostly sing newer repertoire; Tanner is keen to keep the girls interested and excited and challenged.

### 2.9.6. Treatment of Choristers

Although Tanner does work with the boys in the context of the school, it is not in his role as a cathedral employee; his work with the cathedral choir in that specific context ends with the girl choristers. Millington on the other hand rehearses the girls once a week and will sometimes direct them in a service as well, but works primarily with the boys and can speak to the differences in chorister treatment with more perspective than Tanner.<sup>146</sup> In Millington's words:

'One thing here is that because it was boys for centuries, boys still do more than half of the services so it's not an even split. But I think the boys need much practice, they need to be kept at it. I think possibly maybe they've got a bit more stamina and maybe the girls are a bit better at doing it well less often. Sometimes I find the girls might sort of flag in a service when you've practised, or the boys might come in on something they know extremely well and it might be dreadful...I think sometimes when they are under pressure and when they're feeling a bit stretched can be a factor'.<sup>147</sup>

He does conclude, however, like many director have noted, that with the boys he can be more direct with criticisms, and with the girls the critique must be more subtle to avoid hurt feelings.<sup>148</sup> He doesn't attribute this as a definitive gender separation however, and it may be due to a number of factors, including the proportion of his time in front of each group and the resulting dynamic it espouses.<sup>149</sup>

---

<sup>143</sup> Millington, Andrew. Interviewed by the author. 5 March 2011.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*



Millington also has a theory on the vocal differences between the boys and girls. He posits that they have very similar sound, and indeed if one stood at the back of the cathedral whilst one group was practising one might not know which group it was.<sup>150</sup> But he also thinks there are factors other than gender that have an impact on the sound, regional dialect to name but one. During his time in Guildford, the southeast dialect of the choristers made the tone slightly 'edgy' in his words.<sup>151</sup> Where they sing and who directs them, he says, are perhaps more weighty factors in explaining the difference in tone. 'I could show you two boys with very different voices and two girls with very different voices and there'd be as much contrast there as there could be between a boy and a girl'.<sup>152</sup>

### 2.9.7. Conclusion

Stephen Tanner is a much beloved figure at Exeter Cathedral, and his enthusiasm for the choir is apparent. The girl choristers here experience all of the hallmarks of choristership; even though they do not sing precisely the same number of services as the boys, they are fully included as a part of the Cathedral Choir.

---

<sup>150</sup> Millington, Andrew. Interviewed by the author. 5 March 2011..

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*



## 2.10. Southwark Cathedral (visited 14-16 June 2011)

The Cathedral and Collegiate Church of St Saviour and St Mary Overie, Southwark Cathedral, is the only London cathedral with a line of girl choristers. A church has existed south of London Bridge on that site since approximately 606 AD.<sup>153</sup> The cathedral was an Augustinian Priory from 1106 until the dissolution of the monasteries when it was re-founded as a parish church dedicated to St Saviour. Purchased from King James I in 1611 by local merchants, the parish church served that area of London for two centuries. Major repairs were done in 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in 1905 it was made the centre of the new Southwark Diocese.<sup>154</sup>

The Dean, the Very Reverend Andrew Nunn, and the chapter lead the Cathedral in its daily operation and worship.<sup>155</sup> Canon Gilly Myers, the Precentor is the head of liturgy and worship. The Director of Music, Peter Wright, directs the choir of men and boys, and accompanies the girls' choir, led by Stephen Disley, the Assistant Organist of the Cathedral.

### 2.10.1. The Girls' Choir

Southwark Cathedral's line of girl choristers, established in 2000, were brought in by the Dean and chapter.<sup>156</sup> They set out to give girls the same opportunities as boys to sing in a cathedral, to receive a quality musical education, and to be a part of worshipping life of the cathedral. They were, and still are, the only London cathedral to offer such an opportunity to girls: St Pauls, Westminster Abbey and Westminster Cathedral have yet to follow suit (despite a co-educational choir school, in the case of St Pauls).<sup>157</sup>

There are as many as 25 girl choristers in the choir at any given time; as they are a voluntary group, the director can fill the stalls to capacity rather than keeping with strict year group quotas. The girls range from age ten to age eighteen. Their weekly commitments are as follows:

---

<sup>153</sup> Southwark Cathedral, 'Visit Us: History and Architecture', <http://cathedral.southwark.anglican.org/visit/history-and-architecture> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Southwark Cathedral, 'Cathedral Community: Who's Who', <http://cathedral.southwark.anglican.org/contactus/#whoswho> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

<sup>156</sup> Disley, Stephen. Interviewed by the author. 20 June 2014.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

**Table 11: Southwark Girls Schedule**

Day	Time	Duty
Monday	4:30-6:15	Rehearsal
	5:30-6:15 (alternate Mondays)	Evensong
Tuesday	4:30-5:00	Probationers rehearsal
Thursday	4:30-5:30	Rehearsal
	5:30-6:15	Evensong
Friday	4:30-6:15	Singing lessons
Sunday	5:00-7:30 (once per term)	Traditional Choral Eucharist

Stephen Disley has directed the choir since its founding, and they have been on many choral tours including Bergen, Rouen, the Czech Republic, Paris and have recorded two CDs. Along with the boy choristers, they have performed in concerts at the cathedral and in other nearby churches.

Prior to 2000, the boys and men sang evensong at Southwark Cathedral on Tuesday and Friday, and two services on Sundays.<sup>158</sup> Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday were evening prayer rather than choral evensong. Southwark Cathedral's plan to include girls took nothing away from the boys' duties: the girls were added in on Monday and Thursday, and the boys carried on with their usual schedule.<sup>159</sup>

The decision to include a girls' choir at Southwark Cathedral came from the Dean and Chapter, and the goal was 'to give girls around the Southwark area and further afield the same opportunities as boys to enjoy this collegiate cathedral choral foundation experience'. This plan was, and remains, entirely unique, but may not have been possible in other cathedrals with a greater number of weekday services. (It is important to note that in this study, Southwark Cathedral was the only one which was ranked Tier Two rather than Tier One according to the Cathedral Organist Association ratings based on number of weekday choral services).<sup>160</sup> The

<sup>158</sup> Disley, Stephen. Interviewed by the author. 20 June 2014.

<sup>159</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the information in the remainder of this chapter and quotations of the director are derived from my interview with Stephen Disley.

<sup>160</sup> Hill, B., 'The Organisation of Music in Cathedrals in the United Kingdom', (Cathedral Organists Association, 1993).

practicalities here were such that the boys only sang Evensong on Tuesday and Friday, and two services on Sunday. There were quite a few dumb days - Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday - to choose from in which to fill in with girl choristers.

### **2.10.2. Recruitment and Audition**

Stephen Disley has a distinct advantage in terms of recruitment: the city of London itself. No other London cathedral has girl choristers, so if a girl in the London area wants to be in a cathedral choir, her options are limited, which Disley recognises to be a stroke of luck for his own recruitment efforts.

He does not rest on his luck, however; the director is proactive about recruitment and actively works on relationships with schools that may be send promising singers his direction. He sends letters around to all local schools, and visits schools fairly regularly to build relationships with the head teachers and music teachers. Several schools in the area use the cathedral's building for special events and services, so there are good links to pursue. Parish churches in the area may also send over some choristers.

Word of mouth plays no small part in recruitment. The girl choristers go on choir tours and perform in concerts, and these types of special activities are a draw to the cathedral choir. A girl need only say that she's been to Paris with her choir, and in another year's time they may travel again, and her friends may be persuaded to give choir a try.

Southwark's girl choir is voluntary - a day choir - with no fees to pay and no financial remuneration. Parents are interested in giving their children the musical education they may not receive in their normal school day, and the cathedral choir is an attractive opportunity. Auditions for the choir are on a rolling basis; a parent can get in touch with Stephen Disley at any point in the year to arrange an audition and he can recommend the best time her the chorister to join.

### 2.10.3. Repertoire

The girl choristers do not often sing with the men. It has only been in the last year that they have begun to sing 4-part repertoire; the bulk of their music list is treble only. The director chooses pieces written for one- or two-parts rather than singing only the treble line of a 4-part piece. Composers such as Philip Moore, Malcolm Archer and John Rutter are writing for treble voices, and these ones are particularly beloved amongst the choristers.

Since January 2014, however, the girls have begun to sing with the men on Monday evenings. The director says it has become rather a hassle because in addition to the regular rotation of treble only repertoire for alternate Thursdays, and the turn over rate with girl choristers leaving every year and new choristers coming in, he must now keep a whole other set of repertoire which is 4-part for Mondays.

Learning the new repertoire is a hefty task as well. They must keep the Thursday repertoire prepared, and to an extent, Disley says he relies on the fact that the older girls will remember the treble-only repertoire whilst they learn the 4-part pieces. His goal is that the girls should sing with the men on Mondays as well as Thursdays to remedy the situation, but that falls to resources and being able to pay the men to sing on another day.

### 2.10.4. Hierarchy

There are six medals to be awarded in the Southwark Cathedral Girls' Choir. Two are the head choristers, and there are four corner girls; all are given to the girls in the oldest years. They are named for founders and benefactors of the choir - the Londre Choristers and the Lithgow Choristers - and the final two are the Millennium Choristers. Disley is aware that some cathedrals choose not to install any sort of hierarchy in their choral ranks, but unlike many other cathedrals, these are primarily a show of gratitude to the people who helped to make the choir possible rather than a signifier of greater importance. He holds all the oldest girls accountable to be good role models for younger or newer girls, regardless of whether they wear of a badge or not.

Chorister hierarchies can become problematic amongst parents of the choir – even more so than amongst the choristers themselves. Disley keeps the parents ‘at arm’s length’ and is very clear that they do not hold any special power over the running of the choir in any way. The urban environment and the older age range of the girl choristers makes this particularly easy to do. Most girls arrive at the cathedral on their own via public transportation; it is only the youngest ones who are brought in by the parents.

#### **2.10.5. Different Roles**

Stephen Disley explains the main purpose for the girl chorister: ‘Well their role here is to enhance the worship and do the *opus dei* of evensong, and if somebody says is there any more they could do, well they are in school and have a busy life and exams and all the things and pressures that schools and colleges put on them these days, there isn’t any more you can do’.

The director notes that there is no intention of adding more services at which the boys and girls should sing together. There are the major events and they use what is called the Great Choir, which is the combined boy and girl choristers with the men. But, in Disley’s words, ‘We don’t have the space or resources to have 55 children in one room, it basically becomes crowd control rather than music-making. The kids will put up with that occasionally because it’s a big event – like the Queen was here – but they all have their own roles’.

An initial concern when bringing in the girl choristers was that the boys simply would not like it: that they might not like the ‘other’ group, or feel their role has been infringed upon. But according to Stephen Disley that was simply not the case. The choristers were slated in on different days, had little interaction besides, and opinions change. ‘It’s now been fourteen years, they’ve all gone on, the boys and girls in the choir now know no different’.

#### **2.10.6. Dress Codes**

The boy and girl choristers at Southwark have different vestments, and interestingly, it is the boys’ vestments that are out of line with the rest of the cathedral clergy and staff. The boys’ vestments were made from cloth donated by the Royal Navy nearly a century ago which is a

dark grey colour. The clergy were in green cassocks until the Dean changed them to black as a matter of personal preference. The girls were brought in and clad in the same black vestments as the clergy, which was the sensible thing to do. The plan is to eventually replace the boy choristers' vestments to match the black cassocks of the girls.

When planning the vestments for the girl choristers, various options were considered, such as gowns or albs, like some cathedrals choose to do for girl choristers to set them apart in some way. But Disley refused: 'I wanted them to look like choristers. If you're a priest dress like a priest, if you're a chorister...I wanted them to look like that. And the girls wanted to look like that as well. I've seen some places that wear the most extraordinary things...I thought, no, I want them to look like choristers, and I don't mean boys, just choristers'.

#### **2.10.7. Conclusion**

As the director of the only London cathedral girls' choir, Stephen Disley is in a privileged position. He never lacks choristers - indeed there are at times 25 or more girl choristers in the ranks. This cathedral is unique in that the boy choristers carried on with precisely the workload they have always had, whilst the girls were folded in. The girl choristers have been established here for more than fourteen years, and their role has not increased, or changed in any way: precisely as the director intended.



### 2.11. Wells Cathedral (visited 1-4 March 2011)

Wells Cathedral is located in the Somerset countryside, one of only two cathedrals in England not accessible by train (the other is Ripon). It is most recognisable by its strainer arches, sometimes called scissor arches, around the crossing, added by master mason William Joy in the 14<sup>th</sup> century after structural damage caused by the weight of an enormous lead-topped spire.<sup>161</sup> Wells is also known for its secular buildings, including the Bishop's Palace and Vicars Close, where the vicars choral (lay clerks) now live, and its original clock, presumed to be the second oldest working clock in Britain.<sup>162</sup> At each quarter hour, figures of jousting knights rush around the top of the clock, the quarter chime struck by the heel of the Jack. Also notable is the Chapter House, the only one to be built on the first floor over an undercroft.

Wells is directed by its Dean and Chapter. The Very Reverend John Clarke is the Dean of Wells, and alongside Canon Precentor Nicholas Jepson-Biddle, Canon Chancellor Andrew Featherstone, and Canon Treasurer Dr Graham Dodds, he leads the daily life and worship of the cathedral.<sup>163</sup>

Daily services are held here, the schedule is as follows:<sup>164</sup>

#### **Monday to Saturday**

7:30am - Matins

8:00am - Holy Communion

5:15pm - Choral Evensong, except on Friday, which is said Evening Prayer

#### **Sundays**

8:00am Holy Communion

9:45am - Choral Eucharist

11:30am - Choral Matins

3:00pm - Choral Evensong

---

<sup>161</sup> Wells Cathedral, 'Scissor Arches'. <http://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/history/historical-highlights/scissor-arches/> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).

<sup>162</sup> Wells Cathedral, 'The Clock', <http://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/history/historical-highlights/the-clock/> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).

<sup>163</sup> Wells Cathedral, 'The Chapter', <http://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/whos-who-contact/the-cathedral-chapter/> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).

<sup>164</sup> Wells Cathedral, 'General Services and Calendar', <http://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/worship/general-services-calendar/> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).

### 2.11.1. The Choir

The Wells Cathedral Choir consists of 36 boys and girls in years 4 to 8, all educated at the Wells Cathedral School, an independent boarding and day school which has a specialist track for music.<sup>165</sup> Choristers generally choose this track later in their schooling, if they remain at the school after their chorister tenure; specialist routes are chosen generally in year 9, though there are a few exceptions of younger children choosing this track.<sup>166</sup>

The choristers are timetabled just slightly differently from their peers; extra time is given for instrument practise, and rehearsals are every morning at the start of their school day. They receive music theory tuition during lunch and are sometimes taken out of class (usually art) for extra tuition to benefit the choir.<sup>167</sup> From year 7, the choristers are timetabled in the music form, meaning they are timetabled as specialists, but are not fully classified as such (it amounts to a closer affiliation with music specialism than with the non-specialist students, almost a pre-specialism track).<sup>168</sup>

Matthew Owens is the director of the Wells Cathedral Choir, assisted by Jonathan Vaughn, assistant director and a senior organ scholar, which is a post-degree gap year position. At time of research this post was filled by Stephen Buzard, an American organist in-between his undergraduate degree and postgraduate study.

The boy and girls choristers sing equal services with the Vicars choral, the twelve men who sing the lower music parts. A typical week might be scheduled thus:<sup>169</sup>

---

<sup>165</sup> Wells Cathedral, 'Choristers', <http://www.wells cathedral.org.uk/music-the-choir/choristers/> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).

<sup>166</sup> Vaughn, Jonathan and Stephen Buzard. Interviewed by the author. 4 March 2011.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> Wells Cathedral, 'General Services and Calendar', <http://www.wells cathedral.org.uk/worship/general-services-calendar/> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).

**Table 12: Typical Wells Chorister Schedule**

Sunday matins	Girl choristers and men
Sunday Eucharist	Boy choristers and men
Sunday Evensong	Boy choristers and men
Monday Evensong	Boy choristers and men
Tuesday Evensong	Girl Choristers and men
Wednesday Evensong	Men alone
Thursday Evensong	Girl choristers and men
Saturday Evensong	Boy choristers and men

The following week, the girl and boy services would change places, so that the number of services would be equal over a fortnight. Wells Cathedral indicates the performing forces on their service sheet. Until recently these were noted with a system of symbols representing boys, girls, boys and men, girls and men, or men alone, but this system has been changed mark the choral forces more plainly.

In the past, the choristers were all required to board, but that has not been the case for some years. Since boarding became non-compulsory, it has steadily declined. In 2011, there were only three boarders in the choir, two boy choristers and one girl chorister.<sup>170</sup> The catchment area for recruitment, therefore, is quite small. There are no hordes queuing for auditions, but there is some choice, normally two prospective choristers per place.

### 2.11.2. History

The girls' choir was founded in 1994 by then-Director of Music Tony Crossland and the Assistant Director of Music Rupert Gough. At the time, the girl choristers were unfunded; whilst the boys received 45% tuition scholarship, the girls received only a fraction of that, and only up to year 9. The girls were permitted to stay in the choir past year 9, until year 10 or even year 11. In those years they were given only a small bursary, akin to a Christmas bonus.

---

<sup>170</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the information in the remainder of this chapter and quotations of the director are derived from my interview with Jonathan Vaughn and Stephen Buzard.

But there were several issues with this system, the financial side being only a part of it. The corpus of girl choristers averaged on the older side with more years of experience. As a result the girl choristers were year-after-year better than the boys. This was causing some negativity in the choir and unhealthy competition, among the choir and cathedral community as well as in public opinion. Another problem was that the younger girls were having to compete with the older girls. The span of years in the girls' line was eight to sixteen. Girls in year 4 were too afraid to sing up; one may not have heard a sound from them until year 7 or 8.

Reducing the years of the girl choristers solved those problems, and the financial side is levelling out as well. Currently the boys receive 25% scholarship off their tuition fees, whilst the girls receive 15% bursary from a trust created for the purpose. As of 2011, this trust was expanded to support the work of both the boy and girl choristers.<sup>171</sup>

### **2.11.3. Recruitment and Audition**

Wells uses a 'Chorister for a Day' event each October, as many cathedrals do, and they operate this on a quota so that it is evenly divided with prospective girl and boy choristers. According to Jonathan Vaughn, usually this means that there are more girls turned away. The quota is a recent development. The Chorister for a day event is not compulsory for audition, however. Some go straight to the pre-audition. Owens eliminates up to half of the prospective choristers by the time the formal audition day takes place.

Choristers are recruited from within the school (which encompasses junior school years) and in the wider community. The cathedral organists have a good working relationship with the head of music in the junior school that will send promising choristers to the auditions. Once they receive a place, the directors must be mindful of the academic standards of the school: all students gain entrance by academic assessment. If a prospective chorister does not meet the standard, they probably will not cope with the pressure of chorister life and would fail to gain a place.

---

<sup>171</sup> Wells Cathedral, 'Wells Cathedral Chorister Trust', <http://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/music-the-choir/wells-cathedral-chorister-trust/> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).

#### 2.11.4. Hierarchy

The girl and boy choristers each have a head and a deputy head. These choristers are chosen for a combination of skills. The head chorister need not be the best singer, or the most talented musician, but some amount of leadership skills must be visible. In the words of Jonathan Vaughn: 'That's really what we're looking for most, a good role model, so someone who's not necessarily brilliant at the singing, but who showed good discipline in ranks and in other things would be a more likely candidate than someone who was a strong singer but who mucked around all the other times'.

In the event of negligence in duties, or serious behavioural issues, the directors may demote a head chorister, as has happened recently when a head chorister's status was demoted.

#### 2.11.5. Boys and Girls

There is a considerable disconnect between the boys and girls at Wells; they are not generally aware of the other group or what they do. Each line of choristers tends to involve themselves only with their own activities. Stephen Buzard surmises that the boys assume they are better than the girls. He related an incident during a tour to Holland. Wells Cathedral Choir had been rated in the top four best choirs in the world by *Gramophone*, the rating based on a CD recorded by the full choir - boy and girl choristers with the men. When the rating was announced on the tour bus, a boy chorister remarked 'oh, well that's just talking about the boys, right?'

Jonathan Vaughn and Stephen Buzard noted that there are differences with the boys and girls, especially musical ones. The boy choristers tend to want to sing through a piece, and then put it aside, finished, and become more unruly when they have to go back and polish the piece. They must be kept constantly on a close watch and constantly working or else they become distracted and misbehave. This makes rehearsals more difficult when the goal is learning music for future services; if the boys know that the piece is not for immediate performance, they lose focus. For the girls, they can rehearse pieces far out in advance, and they can be a bit more lax on the rehearsal pace. The girls tend to stay very focused throughout the rehearsal with little coaxing.

This applies to engagement in the rehearsal as well. Stephen Buzard says 'With the boys if you ask them questions it gets them talking. You have to tell them things, which may not be as good of a learning style but it keeps the focus. If you ask them something as simple as what does piano mean, it invites two or three of them to start talking because you've given them the floor'. They added that this may not be a generalisation about boys, but perhaps just these ones. In Vaughn's experience (previously at St John's College, Cambridge) this was not the case with the boy choristers at all.

#### **2.11.6. Repertoire and Music Learning**

The boy and girl choristers rarely sing together, and have only enough shared repertoire to account for the few occasions when they do. They join for the service at 'Be a Chorister for a Day', first and last services of the year, Easter Day, Advent carol services and the three Christmas services. They share around twelve or so pieces for these occasions including Britten *Te deum* and *Jubilate*, Mozart and Walton Coronation masses, Duruflé and Chilcott Requiems.

As for the repertoire of each group, the boys have a slight majority of the more traditional repertoire, whilst the girls have a bit more of the modern compositions and renaissance works. These lines are more and more blurred every year, however. With chorister turnover and a rapidly expanding repertoire, the distinctions become more and more vague. Typically, repertoire is assigned for the day, and whichever group of choristers is scheduled for that day will learn that piece.

The choristers learn music in the same way - just a read through, and then picking apart bit by bit, as seen in other cathedrals. If pressed for time, the initial read through is eliminated, and they immediately get on with correcting notes and rhythms with more frequent stops.

As for theory tuition, the choristers use Associated Boards grade levels through year 6, with the aim to pass grade 3 examination. The assistant director and organ scholar teach music theory to the choristers during their school day, originally during lunch, but then it was timetabled in for the choristers to miss out an art class from time to time for theory tuition. The hope is that the

choristers will be able to pass grade 5 examinations by the end of junior school once the theory tuition has been in place long enough.

#### **2.11.7. Aims**

The choir regularly tours and records, and does a BBC broadcast of evensong every year. For the director and for the school, national profile is important - being a highly rated choir helps tremendously in recruitment efforts and in school recruitment as well. Outreach is another focus for Wells Cathedral Choir. They extended the *Sing Up!* programme with outreach funds at the school.

As for music goals, each choir trainer has a slightly different focus in rehearsals. Jonathan Vaughn focused on line, and a smooth legato and good phrase shaping. Matthew Owens' focus is on diction. But the musical goals cannot be one-dimensional; the trainers must respond to the strengths and weaknesses of the group in front of them on that day and singing that piece in those conditions. Gradually the skills come together with experience.

#### **2.11.8. Conclusion**

Issues in planning for the girls' choir meant that significant restructuring had to take place. Funding was not sufficient for the line of girl choristers in its original structure, and the older age range meant that the girls were considered far better than the boys year after year. By levelling out the age ranges and making their rehearsal and service times equal, and gradually fixing the funding situation for the girl choristers, the two lines are becoming more equal.





### 3. Analysis



### 3.1. Whether and Why

When constructing a new line of girl choristers at each cathedral, various factors had to be considered, and decisions made as to each cathedral's philosophy and rationale behind the decision. These include: age range, weekly schedules of rehearsals and services, process of induction into the choral life of the cathedral, who would direct the new line, what repertoire would they sing, how would the girls be taught music and singing, and many more.

These decisions which shape the structure of the choir itself had been tried and tested for centuries with only boy choristers, and largely accepted as best practice; some of the considerations may not have even been consciously chosen. But with a new line of girls, every aspect of a cathedral choir program is called into question, not only for the sake of a brand new choir coming into place, but also for how that new line would integrate with the existing choir.

The first question to be answered is: *should the cathedral have a girls' choir?*

Then: *Why should the cathedral have a girls' choir?* What is the goal in allowing girls (or young women) to enter into the regular choral life of the cathedral?

This shapes the philosophies and the policies made when integrating the girls into the existing choir. The cathedrals investigated in this study fell into three groups: those focusing on exact equality, the chorister experience, or musical opportunities.

The decisions consciously made in support of the goals and philosophies of the choir are planned. But in some cases, practicalities and circumstances shape the structure of the choir, and limit the potential that a new line of choristers can achieve. For some cathedrals, a goal of exact parity between the boy and girl choristers may be impossible due to resources or budgetary concerns. For other cathedrals, anything less than exact parity may be regarded by the personnel to be a justification for gender-based bias.

### 3.1.1. Reasons For or Against Girl Choristers

In 1991, when Richard Seal began the girl chorister line at Salisbury Cathedral, many dissenters made themselves known. It was seen by some to be the end of cathedral choirs and a tradition spanning at least six centuries. The arguments against the inclusion of girl choristers were varied, and today some opponents are loosely joined together through the Campaign for the Traditional Cathedral Choir (CTCC), which aims to make known the (perceived) damage that girl choristers pose to cathedral foundations.<sup>172</sup>

#### 3.1.1.1. The CTCC: Dr Lindsay Eaglesham's Arguments

According to the Campaign's website, the aim of CTCC is not to be *anti-girls*, it is simply that girls should create their own tradition, something new and fresh for cathedral music, rather than integrate in any way into the choirs of boys and men.<sup>173</sup>

The results of such integration, they claim, are not limited to the choristers; they may in fact affect the lay clerks. In the past decade, cathedrals have begun occasionally allowing women to sing the alto parts previously held by men. On the whole, these alto posts offered to women are one-offs. The posts have yet to be held exclusively for women, and in each instance, the next post-holder has been male.

As male altos are rare, and often begin their musical lives as boy choristers who then continued on to become countertenors, the CTCC claims that the supply of countertenors will dry up because girl choristers are usurping boy chorister positions. It must be stated, however, that no English cathedral visited in this study, except Manchester, has expressed any intention of allowing the girls to sing more than the boys, nor to combine the two groups except for special occasions. The line of sixteen to twenty boy choristers still exists today as it did before girl choristers existed.

---

<sup>172</sup> Campaign for the Traditional Cathedral Choir, 'Introduction', <http://www.ctcc.org.uk/intro.htm> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

Dr Lindsay George Eaglesham, some time president of the CTCC outlines in the position of the CTCC in his paper *'In Defence of a Great Tradition'* with four arguments against girl choristers.

### **Eaglesham's Argument 1: 'The Choral Sound'**

Lindsay Eaglesham's first argument posits that that the sound of Anglican choral music revolves around the sound of young male voices, and he laments the appearance of either mixed top lines (as at Manchester Cathedral and St Mary's in Edinburgh) or alternating boy and girl treble lines on the basis of the sound.

'It is a unique choral sound. There is a kind of effortlessness to the singing of the English choirboy – at the highest levels of selection and training – that tends to produce a wistful, often plaintive, sound. It is a timbre that is artless in the finest sense, and most perfect for the Anglican liturgical repertoire. By contrast, a female singer is often likely to interpret the note to a greater degree'.<sup>174</sup>

However, this argument is largely subjective. Many directors in this study in fact disagree with the argument that girls between the ages of roughly eight and ten years old sound much different from their male counterparts, and through their own observation they posit that differences in sound only appear around age eleven or twelve.

If one does believe that the sound of young girls is different from young boys, one must then ponder whether one or the other can be claimed to be superior. Or are they simply different, like apples and oranges, which contribute different qualities that are enjoyable in different ways?

### **Eaglesham's Argument 2: The Beautiful and Fleeting**

His second argument is that the boy treble's voice is both beautiful and fleeting, and should therefore be given every opportunity to be used in the short time that it exists.

---

<sup>174</sup> Eaglesham, L.E., 'In Defense of a Great Tradition', <http://www.ctcc.org.uk/In%20Defence%20of%20a%20Great%20Tradition.pdf>

In a vacuum, this argument is valid. Boys are only trebles for so long, and should therefore be allowed to use that voice more often. Lindsay Eaglesham implies that this should mean daily evensong, no sharing of responsibility with girl choristers, all weight of musical leadership in services at the cathedral should rest squarely on the shoulders of these boys from age eight to twelve.

However, choral programmes - indeed *children* in the 21<sup>st</sup> century - cannot exist in a vacuum. Choristers are just that: children. They have parents who must transport them to and from the cathedral for rehearsals in the morning and home after evensong. Alternately the parents might have to send their very young boy to board at the school; this is a very personal decision and relies on family dynamics (and socioeconomic status in many areas). The schedule of the chorister must fit in to the whole picture of his or her family's life. Should a family be made to alter their parenting philosophies - making their child the centre of the families life around which all activity must revolve - in order to more fully appreciate the boy treble sound in a manner Lindsay Eaglesham finds appropriate?

The child himself must also be considered. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, children are exposed to many more opportunities than in previous decades: sport, other art forms like drama or dance, socialising at younger and younger ages (made ubiquitous by technology and social networking), and after-school clubs of every imaginable variety. A boy chorister may have a beautiful and fleeting gift, but daily evensong duties effectively quash all other extracurricular time. The boy may wish to try other activities, and should he be made to sacrifice his joy for the sake of a tradition that may or may not have meaning to his own life? What will happen to that boy once his gift has gone with his treble range and he may not know if he has any other interests or skills?

Directors in this study have praised the addition of girl choristers in those cases where the boys are relieved of some of the responsibilities. At York Minster, the girls sing Evensong on a Wednesday because there is a popular after-school team sport that most of the boys want to join, and the evening off gives them that opportunity. They also alternate weekends - the group that sings the Friday evensong will not sing again until Sunday evensong. This allows families to

go away, take a weekend trip, visit grandparents, and enjoy family time. Is it right to deprive the boys of activities which will make them into more well rounded individuals?

### **Eaglesham's Argument 3: Scriptural Basis - Male aggression**

'Also, at risk of making too grand a point, the boy treble choir represents for me a kind of magical force against nature, so to speak. The expression of the male in high-voice tenderness inspires feelings that suggest the Christian call for the transformation of hearts and minds. When we hear the echoing softness of the boy's voice in solemn musical ministry we can know that it is something that is there only for a relative moment in time, and that it will all too soon dissolve into the more assertive tones of manhood. To extend the metaphor, the treble voice projects the sound of tamed masculinity. In that way, aggression is turned to love, emphasizing [sic] the necessary transformation of man's nature, as the scriptures command'.<sup>175</sup>

However, Eaglesham neglects to consider the girls. Girls can grow up to be aggressive, in the same way that boys can grow up to be more sensitive. Aggression can be turned to love through music and worship by all people, indeed it could be argued that the goal of the church is to show that love that can turn aggression into love for all people. That it could or should be limited to only boys is a difficult position to support when it could so easily be labelled as misogyny.

It should also be said that there is no cathedral that intends to take this opportunity away from boys. Indeed the cathedrals in this study intended either exact parity or a weighted system with boys having more responsibilities than the girls. In those cathedrals where the girls sing half of the services, the boys still sing, they still rehearse, they may even sing in their school choirs. Is it any Christian's place to judge that the singing of evensong is superior to the school choir's concert?

### **Eaglesham's Argument 4: Shy Boys**

His final argument, and the one shared by the vast majority of dissidents, is that boys are more often shy of the arts, the performing arts in general, and that the institution of young boys

---

<sup>175</sup> Eaglesham, L.E., 'In Defense of a Great Tradition', <http://www.ctcc.org.uk/In%20Defence%20of%20a%20Great%20Tradition.pdf>

sharing the experience of choral music together is fragile. If it were to be 'diluted' by girls infringing on their space, they would lose their interest or confidence in singing.

Of these arguments, this was the one shared by most directors in this study. It was expressed as an apprehension before installing the girl choristers: would the boys be run off from the choir? For this reason, the cathedrals in this study (and indeed, every cathedral aside from Manchester and St Mary's, Edinburgh) keep their boys and girls separate. They sing together only for the major services such as Easter and Christmas. Some cathedrals that have different age ranges for girl choristers cite that the boys and girls are barely aware of the other group - why should an eight year old boy even notice the daily life or routine of a sixteen year old girl? Their lives do not overlap in any way, 'out of sight, out of mind'. For the boys, the cathedral choir still feels like a boys' activity, according to the directors involved in this study.

To turn that argument around entirely, how would one then explain the boost in boys' recruitment that occurred because of girl choristers? Several directors noticed this pattern and they were unanimously surprised and had not considered that the girls who become choristers would have younger brothers. Those brothers would be around the cathedral, see the girl choristers, and see at Christmas and Easter that boys could do the same, and apply and audition. In this study, not one director reported that girl choristers had a negative impact on boy choristers: they had either no impact or a positive impact.

### **3.1.1.2. Mr Theo Saunders' Argument: 'Equality is not Quality'**

In his article "Girls and Women, and the Choral tradition of the English Cathedral" in *Cathedral Music*, the Magazine of the Friends of Cathedral Music, Mr Theo Saunders posits that the mission of equality for boys and girls in cathedral music is neglecting the quality of the tradition. He laments the concessions made in the life of the cathedral: that choir holidays are longer, that matins is not sung daily, that there is a 'dumb day' in most cathedrals. Theo Saunders counts these as a loss.

Theo Saunders writes beautifully about tradition, and what makes up a tradition, how one defines a tradition:



'In Parry's anthem 'My soul there is a country far beyond the stars', there is something delightful about the way in which he sets the text 'one who never changes'. Whilst the words assert the concept of changelessness, the music does just the reverse, with its regular transition from one key to another. Tradition is rather like this - full of constants, yet ever varying. However 'tradition' is often solely synonymous with what has gone on in the past, as if it has no bearing on the present. My belief is that there is something more fluid to it. Tradition, I assert, is the handing on, from one generation to another, of that which is treasured'.<sup>176</sup>

He goes on to name those things that have been added to the tradition which are now considered the norm including singing in harmony, organ accompaniment, organ voluntaries before and after a service, processions, singing in English, hymns, tours, visiting choirs, and so forth.

He then makes the point that the irony of the introduction of girl choristers is that the tradition of singing is not actually being made available to them, and, in addition, it is being taken away from the boys. It would seem that Theo Saunders accepts the idea that the cathedral tradition has been fluid, rather than eternally unchanging - although that fluidity has existed within certain limit. However, it also seems that the acceptable limits to Saunders's fluidity are exceeded when the choristers sing fewer than eight services per week, and especially when this reduction is made because of the necessity of distributing the total number of services between boys' and girls' choirs.

Saunders posits that there will be consequences which will spell out the death of a tradition by his terms: that if services are taken away from boys, they will be less familiar with the psalms and they will have a smaller repertoire, and their 'pacing' will be negatively impacted.<sup>177</sup>

It would seem that Theo Saunders' eloquent definition of tradition, and his enjoyment of fluidity, meshes well with modern society and the position of all of the directors in this study and the mentality that allowed girl choristers to become a part of the great cathedral choral traditions. But in practise, there is a vast disconnect. He writes: 'Increasing demands from employers and schools, in terms of time and effort, from employees and pupils, could well

---

<sup>176</sup> Saunders, T., 'Girls and Women, and the Choral Tradition of the English Cathedral', *Cathedral Music*, 2/2000.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*

erode the ability of singers to give the choir the attention it needs to function effectively'.<sup>178</sup>

Theo Saunders' argument here echoes the problems that so many cathedrals face in terms of community engagement: that the church is stuck in the past.

Today's culture offers so much to young people and adults to enjoy and become well-rounded individuals. Universities and employers expect well-rounded individuals to come through their doors. Whilst the cathedral choir is a reputable institution, it is not the only one in existence. Those directors and cathedrals forward-thinking enough to accept this welcome the reduction in duties for the boys which allows boys to have a range of hobbies and interests apart from the cathedral, whilst giving girls the opportunity to do the same.

### 3.1.1.3. The Purists' Argument: Differences in Sound

The cathedral Dean and chapter must decide and agree upon their opinions on the sound of girl choristers. In some cathedrals, this aspect dominated the decision of how the girls chorister line was structured, its goals and how it is run day-to-day.

As discussed previously, the tradition of boy choristers in the cathedral choir is a treasured one. Much of the music sung by cathedral choirs was written with boy choristers in mind. If the position is taken that the girl choristers do sound different from the boy choristers (a position that is defied by some directors in this study) then can they still sing the music intended for boy choristers? One could then extend that argument further into the field of performance practice, and how much of performance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is true to the wishes of composers throughout history.

A study devised by the Campaign for the Traditional Cathedral Choir's A.E. Saunders (not to be confused with the aforementioned Theo Saunders) set out to prove mathematically that there was indeed a difference in the vocal qualities, and concluded that this difference had a

---

<sup>178</sup> Saunders, T., 'Girls and Women, and the Choral Tradition of the English Cathedral', *Cathedral Music*, 2/2000.

'make it or break it' impact on the repertoire of cathedral choirs.<sup>179</sup> He referenced a study done in 1996 that has become somewhat infamous in cathedral choir spheres.

In the 1996 study, a CD was recorded by two cathedral choirs - one with a girls' top line and one with a boys' top line, with the same lay clerks underneath. 189 listeners were asked to identify whether boys or girls sang tracks on the CD. It was concluded that it is indeed very hard to tell the difference between trained girl choristers and trained boy choristers.

There were a number of issues of methodology, which Saunders cites as reasons for the conclusion to be wholly invalidated. There was no mention of conductors, or whether the same person directed the girls and boys, nor any mention made regarding the training of the two groups. The same organ was used to accompany both groups, but a different registration could have altered the result. Saunders also cites the issue of 'sampling without replacement', meaning that the listeners may have been informed that of twenty tracks played, half were boys and half were girls, and therefore at the end of the experiment the listener should have answered ten tracks as 'girls' and ten as 'boys' and may have felt the need to change their original opinion to balance the responses.<sup>180</sup>

It is hard to argue that these factors did not have a great impact on that study. One can easily agree with Saunders that these issues create unstable foundation that cannot be relied upon when considering the results.

It must be said, however, that the directors in this study, if they cared at all about the 1996 experiment, generally did not rate it, or really give it much weight in their decisions regarding girl choristers and the sound they make. Either they believed the two groups of choristers made different sounds, or they believed the two groups to make very similar sounds. That aspect was given a lesser priority; the sentiment shared by directors gleaned from mentions of that 1996 study was that they had better things to do, and just got on with their jobs creating music in the cathedral, no matter what children are standing in front of them.

---

<sup>179</sup> Saunders, A.E., 'The voices of boy and girl cathedral choristers - Is there a perceptible difference? And does it matter?' 4 April 2009 <http://www.ctcc.org.uk/Website%20article%2000.pdf>

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

One may recall David Halls' philosophy regarding the chorister sound:

'So we've got same equipment, same people, same space... Singing with the same organ, same song room, same music room, all the same. So therefore you take that logic and think: is it a great surprise that they sound more or less the same?... Someone says 'do your boys sound different from the girls?' I'm saying, on the one hand sometimes, on the other hand, sometimes not. It's nothing I do; I just do what I do!'

### **3.1.2. Yes to Girl Choristers – but why?**

When the cathedral has navigated the terrain of whether to have girl choristers, and their philosophy and rationale behind the initial yes, they must then think of the role those girl choristers will play. They have a context in relation to the cathedral, in relation to the other choristers, the lay clerks, the national or international prestige of the cathedral's music and their public presence, the choir school or local schools, and the worshipping life and congregation of the cathedral. Where do the girls fit into the picture?

In this study, one can discern a pattern and loosely group the cathedrals into three sections: those that aim for perfect equality between the boy and girl choristers, those that wish the girls to have 'the cathedral chorister experience', and those that invite girls to have musical opportunities and contribute in some way to the musical life of the cathedral. Some cathedrals may move from one classification to another due to practicalities, or changes of philosophy or personnel.

#### **Group 1: The 'Exact Equality' Cathedrals**

If the goal is for the girls to be on exactly equal footing with the boy choristers, then the answer to every question and decision must be 'in the same way as the boy choristers'. How will the girls be educated, what ages will they be, who will direct them, what will they sing, how many services in the week will they sing, what vestments will they wear? At Durham, Salisbury, York and Bristol the answer became 'the same as the boy choristers' (although there is a slightly different impetus behind that equality for each, which is discussed later).

In Durham, the personnel of the chapter shaped the philosophy and goals for the choir, and the push for equality had a feminist slant. The goal of girl choristers there, from as early as

1994 according to a member of the chapter, came from a desire to create true equality at the cathedral. The girl choristers would not be tokenistic; there would not be merely a 'sense' of equality, but a true depth and purpose as an extension of the mission of the cathedral. Nothing less than exact parity would be acceptable.

Durham modelled their programme like the one at Salisbury. Richard Seal, when he began the line of girl choristers at Salisbury Cathedral in 1991, believed that there was simply no reason for the exclusion of girls any longer from the cathedral choral world. His friend, Richard Shephard, was instrumental in the decision at York Minster, and based choral reshaping on religious principals, claiming that 'Even if [the girls] sounded like creatures from another planet, I didn't think the Almighty was going to object!'

Bristol Cathedral's chorister equality began as something quite different, with a line of girl choristers who sang only when the boys were on holiday (half term, or dumb days). The chorister school at that time was an independent day school. The choristers were linked to their scholarships in terms of what responsibilities they must take on in the cathedral, but the school was struggling financially. It was made co-educational, and shortly thereafter made into an academy. Government regulations dictated equality between girl and boy choristers at Bristol Cathedral, and it was implemented very quickly with that same impetus.

## **Group 2: The 'Chorister Experience' Cathedrals**

If the goal is to enable the girls to have 'the chorister experience', the cathedral must define the term for themselves. In this study, the cathedrals with this goal in mind pinpoint certain hallmarks that outline the chorister experience that the boys enjoy: they get to sing in the cathedral on a regular basis, they sing a certain type of repertoire to a reputable standard, they have choral experiences in which they represent the cathedral as choristers to the outside world (e.g. choral tours and outings, concerts, recording CDs, outreach).

Perhaps not every detail is in perfect parity with the boys: maybe the girls sing three services a week to the boys' five, or wear a slightly different style of vestment from the boys, or are trained primarily by the assistant director of music rather than the director of music. Those details may

not be defined as the purview of the chorister experience from the cathedral chapter's perspective; and are rather details that circumstance and practicalities must dictate.

For example, if a chorister school is a boys' independent day school, like Guildford's, the opportunity to attend the cathedral choir school cannot be extended to the girls. It is an untenable option. But the girls are still trained and directed by the same director as the boys, sing regularly in the cathedral, sing the same type of repertoire and very often with the men, to the same quality standard as the boys, and the girls share the same mission of supporting the music in the cathedral. The goal is to give the girls the chorister experience, and that is indeed accomplished to the degree by which it is defined for that location.

### **Group 3: The 'Musical Opportunities' Cathedrals**

Some cathedrals claim they want to give girl choristers some of the same opportunities as the boy choristers. In these instances, a pattern emerges. The circumstances or resources of a cathedral limit which opportunities can be extended to both boys and girls. Some can be shared, and some cannot.

Cathedrals with this goal in mind were not included in this study due to limitations of my own resources. A characteristic common to cathedrals with this type of girl chorister line is a very low relative frequency of rehearsals and services for the girl choristers compared with the boy choristers. The girls may only sing when the boys are away on holidays or half term.

#### **3.1.3 The Response of the Lay Clerks**

As a matter of neither plan nor practicality, the response of the lay clerks is an interesting aspect to investigate. Most cathedrals in this study have their girls sing with the same lay clerks, just as the boys do, so what do the lay clerks think of this, do they respond well, are they supportive of the girls?

Liverpool Cathedral had an interesting experience in this regard. The lay clerks were not originally supportive of the girls. David Poulter related that some men indeed took all of their

allotted days off on the days when the girls were scheduled to sing. It took a few years for the men to come around to the talent of the girls, it was as if the men expected the girls to prove themselves. And prove themselves they did. Now, the girls enjoy warm support from the lay clerks. In fact the lay clerks enjoy the girls choristers for the different repertoire they now enjoy. The girls at Liverpool sing some more challenging repertoire (interesting tonalities, complicated rhythmic structure, more foreign languages) because they average at an older age, and have a longer time in the choir. The men have the opportunity to enjoy a good challenge when they sing behind the girls.

One may recall at Wells, Jonathan Vaughan and Stephen Buzard noticed a different pastoral relationship from the men to the boys that does not exist with the girl choristers. If the boys are behaving poorly in a rehearsal where the men are present, Vaughan related that he has seen a lay clerk take that boy aside for a talk which has not happened with the girls. The girls misbehave far less often than the boys, which one must take into account, but that pastoral relationship does not need to exist so much in their case

At Salisbury, David Halls believes that two factors affect the support of the men for the girl choristers. The first is that when Richard Seal brought in the girl choristers, he asked the men to be supportive. The lay clerks were very fond of Richard Seal, respected him as a musician, a colleague and a friend, and were happy to support what Seal asked them to support. The second factor is that the lay clerks are, on the whole, family men. There is no university in Salisbury. A choral scholar, as opposed to a professional lay clerk, would very much be the exception to the rule at Salisbury. These family men have children, some have daughters, and that fact alone would make it easy for a lay clerk to support girl choristers in the same way as they do boy choristers.





### 3.2. Planned Parity or Distinctiveness

In those cathedrals with a line of boy choristers and a line of girl choristers, there will be similarities and differences between the two lines. These could be in how the two groups are operated, what they do, what they sing, how they are taught, how they look, where they are drawn from, and when they sing.

There may be parity between the two groups in any of those items or there may be distinctiveness. Of those two options - parity or distinctiveness - the result may come from a planned strategy for any number of reasons, or may be a matter of circumstance and resources already in place, over which the cathedral may not have a large amount of influence.

As discussed previously, the planned decisions reflect the philosophy and goals of adding a line of girl choristers for any cathedral. During the 1990's when many cathedrals were adding girl choristers to their choral programmes, there was a considerable amount of guesswork involved; cathedral chapters would have to address concerns and hope that the systems they put in place would actually alleviate those concerns or stop them from coming to light in the first place.

As more cathedrals saw the happenings at Salisbury, and other cathedrals in the early days of girl choristers, Deans and chapters around the country wanted to replicate the effort and allow girls into their cathedral choirs. But the resources and circumstances of a cathedral may hold more sway than the plans or philosophies.

#### 3.2.1. Chorister Hierarchies

The issue of whether to install a system of hierarchy has implications in child development of leadership skills as well as current trends in education - current educational advice dissuades setting any child as greater than another.<sup>181</sup> This can be seen as rational: in recent years the issue of child bullying in schools has been featured in the news more and more often, not only

---

<sup>181</sup> United Kingdom, Parliament, *Equality Act 2010: Elizabeth II. Part 6 Chapter 1*. (London: Stationery Office, 2010).

in England but in America as well.<sup>182</sup> To protect the self-esteem of more sensitive children, establishing a hierarchy may be detrimental.

But in the context of a choir, there is a natural hierarchy which exists. The skill and musical acumen of the choristers build as they gain more experience in the choral setting. They learn more about musical notation, and their natural development supports the connections between what they see on the page and how they control the sound they make. Gradually a young person will learn healthy singing habits and their biological development may lead to a natural vibrato in the voice. There exists an uncontrollable hierarchy in a group of sixteen to twenty children between the ages of eight and thirteen, or eight and sixteen.

In this study, every cathedral purposefully chose to create parity between their boy and girl choristers with regard to hierarchy. In some cathedrals, there was already a chorister hierarchy in place in the boys, and that same hierarchy was created in the girls. This hierarchy followed the natural, uncontrollable hierarchy as above: senior choristers, head choristers, deputy head choristers were named to reflect musical skill and social leadership which existed already. This was done the same way for boy choristers as it was for girls with no exceptions. In no cathedral was a hierarchy named for the boys and eschewed for the girls, or vice versa.

In those cathedrals where there was not a purposeful hierarchy already for the boys, there was none created for the girls. If a hierarchy system was changed or removed (as was the case with York Minster) then it was changed for both gendered lines.

In those cathedrals with a hierarchy of choristers, the same criteria were used in naming the ranks for the boys and girls; on the whole it came to musical skill and social leadership. Most cathedrals with a hierarchy had a head chorister and a deputy head chorister, both taken from the top year, whilst the other choristers in that top year were also expected to show leadership to the younger ones in the choir.

---

<sup>182</sup> Campbell, D., 'Mental health of children and young people at risk in digital age', *The Guardian* 4 November 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/nov/05/children-cyberbullying-self-harm-gaming-mps-concern> (accessed 11 November 2014).

In those cathedrals without a hierarchy, the natural hierarchy of learned skills was still present, and largely the oldest year group was expected to behave as leaders to the younger ones in the same way that the choirs with a hierarchy would expect of their eldest choristers. In Exeter and York the titles were taken away due to social problems which resulted from the exalting of one child over the others, and in both of those cathedrals, the directors cited the issues of parents as the major determining factor. The shared experience was that the parents of the head chorister or deputy head chorister expected privileges due to their child's rank in the choir, such as better seats for large services and concerts.

At Salisbury, David Halls is committed to defending the hierarchy of his choristers. He sees the head chorister and deputy head chorister roles as absolutely vital, and quashes any entitlement from the parents with justification clearly laid out in his chorister handbook. The head chorister and deputy head provide leadership to the rest of the choristers in matters that are easier settled amongst peers rather than from an adult authority figure. Smaller pastoral concerns go to the head choristers first before the directors, matters like a younger chorister feeling poorly, or arguments between two choristers. It is the role of the head chorister to talk with the involved parties to see if a resolution can be found if it is a minor issue. If none can, then the matter goes to the directors. If David Halls sees that a girl is looking unwell and excuses her to the toilets, he will send the head chorister after her whilst rehearsal continues.

Salisbury's head chorister is also the logistical point-person. One may recall David Halls' amusing story of a tour of the girl choristers to Italy. At a concert the choristers were put in their places in the performing area and were told that they needed to process to these places from their green room. David Halls only had to tell his head chorister and deputy head chorister that he needed to see to other issues, and they had ten minutes to figure out how to get all the choristers from point A to point B. When he returned in ten minutes, it was done. The head choristers had asserted their authority quickly and effectively, and the obstacle was completed.

In Guildford the head chorister roles are also seen as crucial, and those choristers are like non-musical assistants for the directors. They assist in laying out the music before rehearsal, helping the younger choristers with vestments before a service or concert (including taking a comb to

untidy hair and tying the occasional shoe lace). The youngest choristers are placed on either side of the head chorister and deputy head chorister, and in rehearsals when a new piece is brought out, the leaders turn to their sides and help their smaller peers to find the right place to look before seeing to their own music. The only difference in the chorister hierarchies in Guildford is the selection process. For the boys, the head chorister and deputy head are chosen by Dienes-Williams along with the head of the school. For the girls, the head choristers are chosen by the director and the Precentor.

In Bristol, there is a further hierarchy. The boy and girl choristers are divided into two teams - the *decani* and *cantoris*, and each team has a head chorister. The head choristers are chosen for a range of skills, as explained by Mark Lee, and their context as 'one of the choristers' puts is integral to the authority. He shared an incident when the *decani* girls were not paying attention in rehearsal one morning, chatting and losing focus and wasting precious minutes of rehearsal. The *decani* head chorister had only to give a stern look down the row to straighten them out. Mark Lee related that something about that look was so impressive from a teenaged girl, as if to say that she was putting in 100% effort in to the rehearsal and needs the whole line to do the same, to support the team.

At Ely Cathedral, the girl choristers have no hierarchy specifically related to the choir, but the hierarchies the girls use in the school tend to bleed into their choral life, which Sarah MacDonald does not mind. The girls all board at Etheldreda House, and all the girls at the Kings' School, Ely, have a hierarchy system. In their choral lives, the girls chosen for positions in the school hierarchy have a social leader personality and the girls continue to respect the authority of their house leaders in choir as they do in school.

### 3.2.2. Chorister School

The existence of a chorister school falls under the 'circumstantial' label for the vast majority of cathedrals: either the cathedral has a choir school or they do not, either that school is co-educational or it is not. That resource, for most of the cathedrals - Ely, Exeter, Salisbury, Norwich, to name a few - was already in place when the decision to have girl choristers came about. But for three cathedrals, the partnership with the choir school was reciprocal: the

cathedral's choir takes choristers from the school, thus benefitting the school, and so the school may be willing to bend to benefit the cathedral's goals.

At Durham this was seen in an overhaul of the Chorister School when the decision was taken. As a part of the philosophy for the choir, it was decided that all girl choristers should attend the school as boarders, like the boys. Whilst some girls were already boarding at the school, the physical resources did not exist to maintain a full set of between sixteen and twenty girls. For this, the school built living spaces and facilities to accommodate a larger number of girls to board.

Adrian Beney summed up the financial cost of the decision to have girls on an equal footing with the boys, with no compromises to the chorister situation:

'The basic situation is the parents pay half. So the question is, how do we provide 9, 10, 11, or 12 extra half fee scholarships at the rate of £2000 a term so that's £6000 a year? Times ten or however many choristers? How do we suddenly come up with it, something like £60,000 a year. Plus all the [issues pertaining to] child protection, how do we get the extra staff we need to be dealing with the fact that you've got a bunch of adults looking after all these extra boarding children? So the infrastructure we had to put in place to make all this work was really quite significant. One suggestion was we'd have a boarding top line of boys that we've always had then we'll have a top line of girls who will be day girls and they'll sing once a week. That would have been easy. We essentially had to create a girls' boarding house. We had a small number of girls who were boarding who were not choristers but only three or four, so in a way you could make do with what you've got and one girls loo and bathroom separate from the boys was enough. But then to suddenly have twelve, thirteen or fourteen... And then you're dealing with girls at the age of 13 and they're beginning to want rather more privacy and so you can maybe shove all the boys together but girls will inevitably have different needs and so on. So from the pastoral side it was complicated deal, for good reasons.'

From a financial standpoint, the only way to make the scheme work was to recruit for the school on a general basis, not only for choristers. The class size quota worked to their advantage in this case; the maximum number of pupils in a class is fifteen, and in some classes there were only twelve. By recruiting up to the maximum capacity to teach and bolstering the infrastructure to support increased numbers, the school was able to balance the budgets to allow for girl choristers on the same scholarship as the boys with no decrease for either team.

At York, Richard Shephard, then Headmaster of the Minster School, was instrumental in the decision-making process, and had, several years prior to the girl chorister decision, already converted the school from single-gender to co-educational, as was the trend at the time. His position within the CSA gave him an insight into how other cathedral schools might need to make slight changes to allow girl choristers to be educated alongside the boy choristers, and was in the position to make those changes happen.

Bristol Cathedral's decision was similar, but the more influential half of the cathedral-school duo was the school. The school being made into a government-run academy changed the plans for the girl choristers there, one could argue the academy setup made the girl choristers at Bristol sustainable financially. As Mark Lee related:

'It was a constant battle here just to raise enough money. But since there aren't any school fees now we can be much more creative with the money we have. So for example, the chapter are completely relieved of having to pay any chorister scholarship at all so they give us an annual grant towards touring, about £4,000 a year, and we tour every other year. So we always start with £8,000 in the pot for touring so that's incredibly helpful. It's been useful, allows a more creative use of resources actually. If you pay 50% of school fees [in scholarships to choristers] which is pretty much the normal thing I think, it still leaves the parents to find 50%, and if the school is not absolutely top of the tree they might decide 'well I don't think I'll bother with the cathedral school, for the same money I can send my child to QEH [Queen Elizabeth Hospital School] or one of the other city centre schools. There are lots of independent schools in Bristol and they're all extremely good, so there's plenty of choice.'

If the cathedral had wanted the girls to sing only two services per week to the boys' five, it would have been rendered void by the equality standards dictated by the academy. The whole of the choir, boy choristers and girl choristers alike, was restructured, re-planned with the standards of the government-funded specialist school in mind. The whole of the choral programme is shaped around that structure. Whilst this could be considered a practicality or a product of circumstance, the cathedral entered the agreement as equal participants with the school's restructuring. The choral programme was rebuilt from the ground up for the boys and the girls, all planned and utilising the resources of an academy rather than an independent school as their basis.

### 3.2.3. Attire

In some cases, boy and girl choristers wear distinctive vestments for services in the cathedral. For some, like Salisbury and Exeter, this was a case of setting them apart, in an act of bonding as their own entity using the same colour scheme as the cathedral choir but a different style of vestment.

This planned distinctiveness at Exeter served to unite the girl choristers as their own unit and also to fold them into the aesthetic unit of the Cathedral Choir, as director Stephen Tanner explained:

‘It was meant to be distinctive...the cassocks are different, they’re a distinctive cut and design from the boys and the tabard is nice because it’s the same colour scheme as the boys but it’s distinctive and it has the cathedral’s crest. I think it was a question of what was available and what would blend nicely, because when we do a concert we’re all in cassocks, all in red. I think the tabards just give them their own identity. Essentially we’re all part of one organisation, there’s not really any such thing as the Exeter Cathedral Girls Choir; they’re the girl choristers of Exeter Cathedral. It’s quite an important distinction’.

Salisbury Cathedral had a similar idea in mind. Their cassock and tabard coordinate with the boys’ vestments in colour scheme, but unify the girl choristers as a separate entity from the boys. Their cassocks are white to the boys’ teal, and the girls’ tabards are teal to the boys’ white surplices. When in concert together, the boys and men leave off the surplice and appear in teal, and the girls wear their full vestment with teal tabard. This appears - to the viewer - to be one choir unit all in teal, one does not notice the white cassocks as a primary characteristic.

This arrangement was planned strategically because the colour of Salisbury’s vestments is a specialised fabric and is indeed the only cathedral to use such a hue. It was chosen to match the internal architecture of the building; the undertones of the Purbeck marble reflect that shade of teal.

Norwich Cathedral’s girl choristers have a unique vestment, which is not a typical cathedral cassock and surplice or even alb and tabard. It does not coordinate with the cathedral clergy, the director, the boy choristers or the lay clerks. Their attire is a relic of the girl choristers’ original role as an outreach choir to the diocese. They often sang concerts and occasionally

service in other churches in the diocese, as representatives of the diocese rather than the cathedral. The colour is the blue of the diocesan shield. Currently, resources prohibit changing the robes to match the cathedral choir's cassocks and surplices, even though the girl choristers have been brought back in to the cathedral and sing regularly there and no longer out in the diocese.

#### **3.2.4. Age Range**

When considering age range of the new choristers, cathedral choir directors cited several factors of which they were wary. Competition with the boy choristers, and, as a result, protecting the tradition of boy choristers in the cathedrals was a main consideration, as well as the physiological sound of the girl choristers and what female voices are capable of at various ages with appropriate training.

Avoiding competition with the boy choristers is a priority, and has been since Salisbury Cathedral inducted their new girl choristers in 1991. Richard Seal, then director of music at Salisbury, set the girls to be exactly equal with the boys in line with their philosophy: the girls would be probationers at year 3 (roughly age seven), full choristers in years 4 through 8 (ages eight through twelve or thirteen). The girls would be capable of singing in the soprano range far past age twelve, unlike the boys. They would also have the potential to far exceed the boys in musicality, taking into account the years of training and musical education that extended choral years would afford them. By strategically setting the girls to the same age range as the boys, the leadership at Salisbury Cathedral intended to quell any argument of favouring the boys over the girls or vice versa.

Using a similar rationale, Durham Cathedral's girl choristers follow the same age ranges as the boys. Durham Cathedral's leadership had the advantage of being the most recent in this study to add girl choristers, and had had nearly 20 years to observe other cathedrals and their systems. They modelled their programme on the Salisbury one, with the intent to create a line of girl choristers completely equal to the boys in every way. This philosophy extends to many factors, age range for a start. The goal of equality was the impetus behind the age range decision at Durham Cathedral, with the underlying rationale of eliminating competition by exact equality.



Interestingly, Ely Cathedral's leadership considered age range as applies to competition between boys and girls, and utilised the opposite approach. There is no overlap in ages between the boy choristers and girl choristers. The boys finish their time in choir at the end of year 8, and the girls begin at the start of year 9, and sing through the end of sixth form, up to age 18. Both sets of choristers have five years as choristers. But the cut-off of age is important in this arrangement and takes into account the fact that one set is primarily children, and the other is teenagers. In practice, a group of teenagers and a group of children are so far removed, they are not concerned with the goings on of the other group. Why should one group feel competition with the other?

This philosophy and rationale have proven successful in the context of Ely Cathedral. Although there are other factors involved, to be discussed below, the boy and girl choristers have very little interaction at all; the two groups are protected from comparisons, favourable or otherwise, with the other set of choristers. The girl choristers of Ely Cathedral enjoy the chorister experience within the context of the cathedral's musical life and potential damage to the boy chorister tradition is simultaneously avoided.

Not all cathedrals prioritise the competition aspect, some consider the physiology of the girls' voice to be a more central argument to question of age ranges for the girl choristers. At Norwich cathedral, the Precentor Jeremy Haselock was not keen to have girls of the same age range as the boys because of his own opinions and preferences regarding vocal quality.

'The decision had been taken not to have little girls in parity with the boys' choir but to have eleven to eighteen year olds as the core of the group, so almost adult voices... I didn't like the sound of [a young age range of boys with a young age range of girls] together. I think adult girls, older girls, can be made to sing like boys and sound like boys, but I don't think little girls can.'

From this, one can clearly deduce that a main goal of Norwich Cathedral was that the choir retain the sound of boys' voices. (It is for each individual listener to determine whether young girls sound like young boys, or if older girls can, or should, be trained to sing like young boys, to be discussed below.) In the context of Norwich Cathedral, however, the dominant voice in

the decision was Jeremy Haselock's, and thus the girls currently span from age eleven to eighteen.

### 3.2.5. Schedules

In a centuries-old choral programme consisting of only boy choristers, it stands to reason that it will be the boy choristers, supported by the male voices already in place, who will sing for the choral services. In most cathedrals, there is, and has been for many years, one day a week which is a dumb day where the choir is not engaged in a service. There may also be one day a week in which only the men sing, giving the boys a day off, and likewise a day where only the boys sing, giving them the opportunity to learn treble-only repertoire as well as giving the men a day off.

When integrating the girls into a current system resembling that description, on what days can the girls sing? The questions raised include: should services be taken away from the boys? Will the boys remember their repertoire if they are singing less frequently? Will they feel less vital to the cathedral and therefore leave the choir in favour of football? Or, if services are not taken from the boys, is it worthwhile to have the girls only singing one or two days a week, only in the previously dumb days? Will the men still have their day off?

All of these questions must still be answered by the cathedral within the context of their original philosophy and goal of the girls' line: to what extent is singing with the men included in the chorister experience?

Southwark Cathedral approached this question in 2000, and had an advantage due to their existing choral service schedule. The boys only sang four services per week: one on Tuesday and Friday each, and two on Sunday. Monday and Thursday were dumb days. As the director of the girls' choir, Stephen Disley, explained:

'One of the great successes of starting the girls of Southwark, is that many other places had to take away from the boys to give opportunities to the girls. But we never did, we stuck them into the slot where there was nothing happening. So the boys continued what they were doing since way before the girls started, and the girls continue to be in those slots where nothing was happening.'

The issue arose of what to do about the men; they are professional singers and so need to be paid for singing engagements, and the cathedral lacked the funds to pay them for two further services every week. So the girls sang treble-only repertoire, and the men carried on in their normal weekly schedule. In January 2014, Southwark began an experiment for the girls to sing with the men for one of their two weekly services, thus expanding the repertoire to include four-part as well as treble-only. At the time of research, this initiative was still in the very early stages.

### 3.2.6. Repertoire

A major consideration in the process of bringing in a line of girl choristers is the question of what they will sing. In all of these cathedrals, the boys had previously sung all the services – every evensong, Eucharist, matins, wedding, funeral or other event – either alone or with the men of the choir. As such, they inevitably had a large working repertoire from which to choose. The boys in these cathedrals have a set of repertoire already, which leads to the question of whether the girls will take from the boys' repertoire or if new pieces are to be added in for their use. Will there be overlap in the boys' and girls' repertoire? If the girl choristers are being added into choirs with the goal of giving the girls the same opportunities as boys, how much of the existing 'boys' repertoire' is linked to the 'chorister experience'? There are certain pieces that are considered cathedral classics. Do the boys or the girls go without them?

Taking these issues into consideration, what do the girls sing? They may be assigned repertoire which had fallen out of the normal rotation for the boys, at least initially, perhaps in the first year or two for the girls' line. Perhaps for a number of years the boys sang a particular set of evening canticles rather often, until they felt a bit overused. Some Cathedrals, like Durham, for example, assigned those such pieces to the girls to start with. In this way, those pieces of repertoire are not lost to the cathedral community, the girls gain a starting point in their repertoire list, and nothing is taken away from the current set of boy choristers specifically.

This method could be beneficial also in that the boys and girls start down a path with completely separate sets of repertoire. Gradually more pieces in the boys' repertoire could be 'retired' to the girls' repertoire. For those cathedrals concerned with the possibility of

competition between the boys and the girls, the separate repertoire lists could ease some of that worry.

James Lancelot at Durham Cathedral has utilised this method, and the boys have not yet noticed that their full repertoire arsenal is considerably less stocked because they sing half as many services than they did previously. Lancelot even recounted an occasion where the boys and girls were to sing together for a special event. When he asked if any of the boys knew one of the pieces scheduled (which had been in their repertoire only three years before) they exclaimed that they didn't know it, and why should they because it's a girls' piece! The rolling cycle of choristers coming in and graduating each year allows for certain pieces to simply fade from memory, and in this case was beneficial in easing in the transition of repertoire to the girls.

Of course new repertoire is constantly being added to a musical library in any cathedral. New compositions, or even pieces which have not been performed in that space for decades that fell out of popularity for any reason: to which line should such a new piece be assigned? A choir programme can become stagnant without new works.

Every cathedral choir director has a system of assigning a new piece - either a new composition or a new piece to the choir - to either the boys or girls. Many factors must be considered: the appropriateness of the piece for the service, which team is engaged to sing for that date, the style of the piece, the vocal range, the performing forces, and at times whichever line may be needing a new piece of repertoire to freshen up their list.

Practical issues of scheduling are important to consider: is the piece an evening canticle, or a Eucharistic mass? If the girls do not normally sing Eucharist services, that piece would be eliminated for the girls. If the boys always sing on Friday without organ accompaniment, and the piece requires an integral accompaniment line, then it might not be a good fit for the boys. If the girls are in the middle of learning a passion or another large work for a future event that takes much of the spare rehearsal time, then perhaps that piece ought to go to the boys who have a bit more time to learn it. But ultimately, the assignment of repertoire is planned and specifically chosen.

Another very important factor is the question of performance forces. Certainly in some cathedrals such as Ely, the girls may sing only one service per week with the men, and the remaining one or two services they sing in that week will be on their own. Sarah MacDonald, Director of the Ely Cathedral Girls Choir, chooses to source repertoire written for solo voice only. Stephen Disley at Southwark is also keen to find quality repertoire for soprano-only. He lists composers such as Moore and Rutter, writing pieces now for many different configurations of performance forces.

As another option, the director may choose to have the trebles sing the top line of a 4-part piece alone, with just the organ accompaniment instead of the men singing the lower voice parts. Such a method may work as a temporary solution if a particular line does not normally sing alone, and is doing so because the men have been given a day off. In such a situation, that line may not have a large selection of treble-only repertoire to choose from, so a simple piece with a treble melody could be used as a treble-only piece in that instance. Many directors have stated they utilise this method on a very occasional basis including those of York, Salisbury, Bristol and Norwich.

Another factor to consider are musical issues of style and range. Several directors, including Halls at Salisbury and Tanner at Exeter, note that the girls have particular fortes in certain styles of music, specifically more rhythmic pieces, ones that require a lot of focus and precise counting to execute well, as opposed to more soaring melodies in higher ranges. Robert Sharpe at York has advanced that the boys do particularly well at the soaring melodies; in the final two or three years before the voice break the treble boys voice sounds particularly fine in the higher registers.

At Salisbury Cathedral, the repertoire questions were answered by their philosophy that the boys and girls should be precisely equal. The boys sing evensongs, Eucharist and matins, and thus the girls will sing the same, distributed equally over an academic term (roughly 40 services sung by the boys and girls each). So the kinds of repertoire would be the same. The girls would sing with the men, except for one day per week that the men are contractually guaranteed their day off - very occasionally the boys might sing on the day, but it normally falls to the girls. So

the girls need primarily 4-part repertoire, but also a smaller repertoire of evensong-appropriate, treble only pieces to sing once per week. The classic choral pieces are divided between the boys and girls. He feels there is plenty to go around: Howells has at least a handful of well-known and well loved canticles, half can be for the boys and half for the girls. The same goes for Eucharistic masses and anthems.

As far as the cathedral classics, such as evensong canticles by Howells and Stanford, anthems such as Bainton's "And I Saw a New Heaven", Finzi's "God is Gone Up", Harris' "Faire is the Heaven", Bairstow's "Blessed City, Heavenly Salem" to name just a few, these are divided between the boys and girls. Some pieces were taken away from the boys for this purpose, but in the bigger picture, both groups have exciting cathedral classics to learn and cherish during their chorister years.

How much or how little of the repertoire should overlap between the boys and girls' lines, if any? Every cathedral in this study combines the lines of boys and girls on one or two occasions every year (typically the largest Christmas and Easter services) so some repertoire would need to be common to both choirs for those occasions. But then there are the classic choral works that the director will have to assign or divide up in some way.

### **3.2.7. Nomenclature**

Some cathedrals prioritise the idea of a cathedral choir being the choir of men and boys, rather than expanding the notion to include singing girls in the umbrella of the 'Cathedral Choir'.

It would be difficult to argue that such a decision could be based on practicalities, for what force could truly hinder a title expanded to be more inclusive? Whilst there may be dissenters, those voices who are opposed to the Cathedral Choir belonging to girls as much as to boys, ultimately the decision rests with the cathedral's leadership. The impact is felt in terms of the unity of the choir.

Salisbury Cathedral's bold move in 1991 included amending the charter of the cathedral to reflect inclusive language in the references to the Cathedral Choir. When the girls were added,

they were made choristers of the cathedral's choir, not The Girl Choir at Salisbury Cathedral or any variation thereof. In practice, the community at Salisbury Cathedral is relaxed about their choice of title when referring to the girl choristers. It is a given that the girls are indeed choristers of the Cathedral Choir, but from time to time, they may be referred to as 'Girls Choir' or 'Boys Choir', ostensibly for the sake of expediency or laziness. The linguistic impact is not prioritised and no one denies the girls' full membership status.

Durham Cathedral's community was far more strict. On my first visit there in 2010, I was informed in no uncertain terms that the words 'Girls' Choir' were not to be used. The girls are referred to as choristers. In context, the boys or girls are called 'team', 'line', 'group'; they are never separated into *one choir* versus *the other choir* in any way.

One can understand this as a rational decision: the girl choristers were integrated into the full choir very quickly. In a matter of months the girl choristers at Durham Cathedral met, began to sing together, began to sing in the cathedral for the first time, and then took on four services per week, week in and week out. For choristers so young and so novice, the power of a word can linger; implications that the girls are in any way *other* could be detrimental to the confidence needed to make that quick transition.

Norwich girl choristers are very much *other*: they began in an entirely different chorister role, they are somewhat latched onto the cathedral but not fully integrated into the umbrella of the Cathedral Choir. Ashley Grote, the director, refers to them specifically as a different choir. Within the Cathedral, Ashley Grote directs two different choirs. The attitude of the Precentor towards girl choristers may have influenced this environment. Jeremy Haselock simply does not prefer girls to be in the cathedral choir.

The Norwich Girls' Choir is an impressively bonded group in spite of this. They are voluntary, and perhaps the social aspect of seeing their choir friends only in the cathedral and not daily in their school lives may strengthen this bond, though it would be imprudent to make such a claim without prolonged study which this project does not cover.

### 3.2.8. Probationers

On the whole, girl choristers and boy choristers are integrated into their respective lines in the same fashion in the cathedrals in this study. Every cathedral installed their choristers after a probationary period which generally worked the same way for the boys as for the girls.

Occasionally a cathedral might move boy choristers over from probationers to full choristers a bit earlier if, for example, the boy choristers had lost a boy to voice change. But this was the exception rather than the rule. The typical probation period for boy and girl choristers alike was one year.

The probationer year was used by all cathedrals to bring the newest recruits up to speed to join the full choir. They were taught about the cathedral itself, how to process from point A to point B, what each section of the cathedral was called, the movements made during a service, what the prayer mean, what the parts of a mass are and what canticles are involved in evensong or matins. In those cathedrals with a choir school, the probationer year may also involve a music theory lesson integrated into their school day.

At some point in the year, the director would begin to integrate probationers into more of the chorister rehearsals or join the full choristers in services (in either a singing role or just to vest and stand with the choristers and follow along in their own music to become acclimatised). The probationers would typically have their own rehearsal time to themselves to bond as a group, and these would gradually transition into the full chorister rehearsals as the year goes by.

Some cathedrals have a dedicated teacher for the probationers and some are taught by the director or assistant director of music, or perhaps the organ scholar.

### 3.2.9. Aims of the Choir

Every director in his study was asked about the goals of the choir. I asked: what is/are the top priority/priorities of the choir? I hypothesised several options. Possibly outreach: to represent the diocese as choral ambassadors to schools and other churches. Perhaps prestige, such as tours, concerts, BBC broadcast, and recordings to boost the reputation of the cathedral to the outside world.



Unanimously, directors stated the primary goal of the choir is about the daily life and worship of the cathedral. Interestingly, there were no directors who stated a different goal for the girls than for the boys. Both choirs, no matter the levels of parity or distinctiveness in other areas, no matter if the girls were a part of the Cathedral Choir or a separate Girls' Choir, no matter if they wore different robes, or had a different director, had the same goal of music making in the cathedral. The choir(s) of each cathedral had a primary goal of providing the music for services, and the rest is (in the words of Katherine Dienes-Williams of Guildford Cathedral) 'gloss'.

These other activities of course exist and are a part of the cathedral choir. Most cathedrals participate in an outreach programme, inspired by the government sponsored *Sing Up!*, which provided funding, from 2007 to 2011, for cathedral choristers (girls or boys) to go into schools where very little music happens. The choristers visit the schools and learn pieces of music alongside the other schoolchildren, and at the end of a term, the choristers and other schools join together to perform in concert at the cathedral.

Some cathedrals rate outreach very highly because of its recruitment impact. David Poulter of Liverpool Cathedral specifically mentioned *Sing Up!* as a major recruitment force. The choristers there are drawn from schools all around Liverpool; if the school children are not exposed to cathedral music, they may never know they have a talent for it. Many of the choristers there first experienced the music through the *Sing Up!* programme initially. After the *Sing Up!* programme expired, the Cathedral created funding to continue the outreach programme, as many cathedrals did (York Minster, Wells, Durham, indeed most of the cathedrals in this study).

Recordings and tours, however, are very expensive. With an extra line of choristers to provide for, the cathedral must decide how to handle these prestige activities. Most in this study alternated between the girl choristers and boy choristers, or combined them in some fashion. The predominant response was that the one set of choristers would record a CD, and the next CD recorded would be the other set (whether it was the following year or some years later). The same rule applied with tours.

Some cathedrals combined their choristers. York Minster records a CD almost yearly, and every one since Robert Sharpe's tenure has been a mix of girl and boy choristers - the track listings are not labelled as to which group it is, or whether it is a mix of boy and girl choristers on the track. He occasionally does the same with BBC broadcasts. In 2010 York Minster's BBC broadcast of evensong caused a debate on the online message board as to which group of choristers it was, with voices fervently arguing for boys or for girls. The truth of it was that the choristers in the broadcast were the combined year 7 and year 8 choristers from both the boys and girls' lines. Years since have alternated girls and boys.

Ely Cathedral does not bother with alternating because the funding for these activities is so separate they can each have a completely different schedule. Ely's girl choristers directed by Sarah MacDonald regularly record and tour, with little heed paid to the schedule of boys' recording and touring.

### **3.2.10. Remuneration**

In most of the cathedrals in this study, the boys were paid scholarships or a bursary of some sort before the girl choristers were brought in. The scholarships could be seen as a wage: the job description to sing a certain amount of services per week and receive a certain monetary remuneration for that work. This tended to go towards their education if at a choir school, or for the cathedrals without choir school, perhaps it was a fee paid towards voice lessons or instrument lessons for the choristers.

Financial resources of the cathedral had to be taken into account when the girl choristers were brought in, so in some ways the change in the remunerations for choristers was a decision based on practicality. Some cathedrals were able to allocate their budget in such a way that allowed girl choristers to be paid on the same scale as the boys, that is, if one takes the example of £10/service. If the boys sing four services in a week, and the girls sing three, the boys earn £40 that week and the girls earn £30.

Then some cathedrals can take that parity to a further level and strive to schedule the girls to sing the same amount of services per week (or fortnight, or term) as the boys.

Some are stifled by the financial limitations and can only do as much as their budget already prescribes. The boys go on with their scholarships untouched, and the girls must be paid from some other body or not at all. Liverpool Cathedral has the Centenary Fund which provides the budget for the girl choristers, separate from the Cathedral's budget.

Wells Cathedral had similar financial problems. When the girl choristers were brought in, the planning had not extended to budgetary concerns. There was a question as to whether the girl choristers could continue at all with insufficient funding (for robes, music, the work of the staff, etc, let alone the remunerations).

In those cathedrals with exact equality at heart, it is difficult to defend the position that the girls should be paid less than the boys for equal work. At Salisbury, the boys were awarded a 30% scholarship toward their school tuition. The girls, in the early days, sang only two services per week (they were very gradually increased to full parity with the boys). The financial argument that the girls are paid less than the boys was a key factor in keeping the girls at the lower number of services per week in the very early years. Similarly at York Minster, the girl choristers gradually increased their responsibilities and their remunerations to achieve equality with the boys.

In the same way that remunerations at Salisbury are a good argument for inequality in responsibilities, Durham Cathedral started from a budgetary perspective. The financial obligations were the starting point in the planning for the new line of choristers. With the intention of exact equality, the girls were paid the same scholarships as the boys for their education, which became a good reason to bring them up to speed quickly as far as rehearsals and services. The girl choristers began singing services fortnightly in October of 2009, by November they were singing once weekly, by December twice per week. By the New Year they were on equal footing with the boys.

### 3.2.11. Unified Choir Body

In some cathedrals, the music department may refer to the boy and girl choristers as part of the same choir, and in some they are wholly set apart.

The difference between the 'Cathedral Choir' and the 'Girls' Choir' is a large separation, and can indicate to worshipers and indeed to the girls themselves that this group is not the premier choir, they are a second-tier musical group, perhaps occasional or voluntary. Norwich Cathedral intentionally separates the boy and girl choristers in almost every way. The girls are under the umbrella of the Cathedral Choir proper, but they are indeed the Norwich Cathedral Girls' Choir. In function, historically, they were more focused on outreach; they were engaged in concerts in the diocese to a far greater extent than the boys. They do not attend the Cathedral School and are given no monetary remunerations for their service to the choir.

Similarly at Liverpool Cathedral, the girl choristers began as the Centenary Choir, and were never intended to carry on as either a separate choir or a part of the Cathedral Choir. After a few years in place and generally positive reviews by the chapter and the girls, the Centenary Choir was folded into the Liverpool Cathedral Choir and the girls sing under that name: the girl choristers of the Liverpool Cathedral Choir. But they are still not seen as the premier choir for the cathedral; it is in some ways inclusive in name only. The girls sing only twice per week, wear different robes and are marked in the scheme as the girl choristers.

Ely Cathedral falls under this same distinction but in a far greater extreme as far as the choir programme's infrastructure. Like Norwich, Ely's girl choristers are a separate choir: they do not fall under the umbrella of the Cathedral Choir. But in fact they are not at all a part of the Cathedral; they are a choir supported and funded by the school who sing regularly in the cathedral. They have their own director and assistant director, separate from the boys' director and assistant director. They tour and record CDs separate from the boys, and under their own name of Ely Cathedral Girls Choir (ECGC).

In an act which enraged girl chorister dissenters further, some cathedral directors decided not to mark which group of choristers was engaged to sing for evensong on the day. Whilst most

cathedrals began by marking the schedule in some way on their scheme, some moved away from the practice. York Minster is a good example, as is Salisbury.

### 3.2.12. Directors

The question of who will direct the girl choristers is an important one. It speaks to the resources of the cathedral: can the cathedral afford two separate directors, one for the boys and one for the girls? Or can they afford an assistant director with the skill to not only play the organ and conduct the choristers occasionally in a service, (as some cathedrals tend to utilise an assistant director) but to train a set of choristers, moulding good vocal health habits as well as teaching the repertoire, musicality, and in-house stylistic details? Should a cathedral organist, with no interest or background in chorister training be made to solely train the girl choristers?

This issue of directors questions not only financial resources, but the resource of time: if both sets of choristers are to be trained by the Director of Music, when will this happen, and will there be enough hours in a week to give the girls the attention needed to bring them to a cathedral choir standard.

At Salisbury, the answer was always equality. The goal in starting the girl choristers was that they would experience the same chorister life as the boys have for centuries. The boys are directed by the Director of Music, and so the girls are as well. Rehearsals for the choristers take place in the morning as well as the afternoon for boys as well as girls, and the Director of Music cannot be in two places at once.

This was solved in a way now emulated by York, Durham, Bristol, and others. On a day when the boys are singing Evensong, the Director will run their rehearsal in both the morning and the evening, and the Assistant Director will be with the girls, and vice versa. This means that a large amount of trust must be placed in the Assistant Director; it is important that this role is not filled by just an organist because he or she will be the choir trainer 50% of the time for each set of choristers.

This was the decision taken by Salisbury Cathedral which was in line with their philosophy of equal opportunity; the practicalities demanded by that philosophy, such as which director is in front of the choir, all fell in to place. According to David Halls, who was assistant director of music at the time, he just rehearsed the group that was in front of him. His post expanded to fill the role it needed to fill, and he was willing and capable for the job.

In Durham, it was important for the chapter when including girls into the cathedral choir body to not only present an image of a unified choir, but to truly embrace that philosophy in every way. An extra assistant director of music was added (called sub-organist) to assist in the training of the choristers. Like at Salisbury, the Director, James Lancelot, is with the group that is singing on the day. In the afternoon, one of the other organists needs to play organ for the rehearsal and service, so a third organist was required to direct the other group.

York Minster had the same problem of parallel rehearsals; in fact this problem was one reason why Philip Moore was not keen to add girl choristers into the choir. If he couldn't be the one directing them 100% of the time, that is, to have consecutive rehearsals, he did not want them at all. His arguments were unsuccessful in this regard, and the parallel rehearsals remained, with Jo Wainwright training the girls through a post created in conjunction with the University. It was for a fixed term, however, and when his post finished, John Scott Whiteley and Philip Moore directed the choirs in turns.

When Philip Moore expressed an interest in retiring, the chapter wanted to hire a new Director of Music and Assistant Director of music that would be a sustainable system, and looked the the example set by Salisbury. Robert Sharpe and David Pipe now run the morning rehearsals, and, like Salisbury and Durham, the Director is with the choir that is engaged for evensong on the day.

It is not an easy task, however, and such a co-training team requires trust and a meticulous memory of where exactly the boys and girls are in the repertoire. Robert Sharpe's Assistant, David Pipe, is tasked with fulfilling exactly what the Director needs accomplished in order to have the repertoire prepared for the following day.

### 3.3 Practicalities

Some decisions a cathedral makes when starting the girl choristers are not entirely in their control. In some cases, the circumstances and resources available to the cathedral prohibit the cathedral's decision-making body - the chapter - from creating a line of girl choristers that would match their ideal. The practicalities are sometimes limiting, circumstances sometimes dictate the structure of a new line of choristers.

Resources (including time, personnel, finances, environment) and dissenting voices in positions of power may shape the cathedral choir in significant ways, and create either a parity or a distinctiveness between the boy and newly established girl choristers. Sometimes the practicalities are nothing to do with the resources, but simply more to do with human nature or child development (how choristers learn music or behavioural differences between boys and girls at different ages)

The differences between the boy and girl choristers are sometimes due to practicalities rather than a philosophy or a strategic move to create either parity or distinctiveness. The circumstances and resources of a cathedral play a large role in how the choir is formed. Even before girls choristers are introduced, a cathedral's circumstances influence the life of a choir of just boys and men, it stands to reason that the life of a choir of boys, girls, and men would be impacted by resources of a cathedral.

#### 3.3.1. Music Teaching and Learning

The cathedral directors involved in this study were unanimous in their philosophy and practice of music teaching and learning methodology; in every cathedral, the choristers learned repertoire via the same method, both the boys and girls. The overall method of learning was largely the same also, the essential component being a cold run-through. The choristers, both boys and girls, just open the music and sing through it, glossing over mistakes, ploughing through from start to finish.

This method is invaluable in a cathedral choir environment with any configuration of choristers, whether boys only or boys and girls. When the normal rehearsal time to service time ratio is 1:1, there is no time to waste. Musical skills and theory are learnt on the job for choristers of all skill levels.

In Durham, director James Lancelot uses the rehearsal time to target specific questions to choristers by age group. To the younger choristers, he asks questions about the page in front of them, teaching them to trust the music and navigate around the page to find the answers. This may be the time signature, the composer, or the text. To the next year older, he might ask about key signature and what that means, or accidentals in the music. For the next year older, the questions might be focused on text meaning, or singing a particularly tricky interval. The oldest choristers will be expected to figure out the phrase structure and how to utilise dynamics to illustrate the text meaning, or perhaps name a contemporary of the composer. Posing questions in this way helps the whole group to learn and stay challenged and excited to learn even when there are several skill levels present in the rehearsal room. It wastes no time: every minute is focused on the music and still serves to prepare the choristers to dive in to the piece with the knowledge needed to reduce the frequency of mistakes.

### **3.3.2. Attire**

For Southwark, the difference in vestments is due to practicality: they simply had the robes to hand. The boy choristers wear cassocks in a material which was gifted to them by the royal navy decades ago. At the time, the clergy wore green vestments. When a new Dean came into place, he disliked the green clergy vestments and changed them to black, but the boy choristers kept their grey vestments. When the girls were brought in, Stephen Disley wanted them to dress in the same vestments as the boys but it was discovered that that material was no longer produced. The girls were then attired in black like the clergy. It is the boy choristers who are distinct from the rest of the cathedral, although there are plans to replace their cassocks with black ones when the funding comes in to do so.



In some cases, the parity of attire is only due to circumstance and practicality as well. In Durham, Bristol, and York, the girl and boy choristers have the same vestments because they were on hand already, and the budget conscious option was to use them.

### 3.3.3. Age Range

Boy choristers in every cathedral are limited by an uncontrollable circumstance of their own biology. They can only sing treble lines so long as they have a treble-range voice. They are limited in age range; they must leave the choir when their voices break, around age twelve or thirteen.

Girls, however, retain their soprano range and could remain in the choir for a longer period. Many cathedrals implement a cut-off point, some in line with the boys at age 13, some a bit older to 16, and others still to age 18.

In the case of Bristol Cathedral, the school dictates a different arrangement in age ranges. The school that all the choristers attend is a state-run secondary school academy, and educates pupils from year 7. This causes a problem for the boys because it limits their total chorister years; their voices will break after only two or three years in the choir. Technically, the boys are still choristers until they leave the school at age eighteen, like the girls, but in practice, the girls stay on for several more years than the boys. The philosophy of equality exists - as a state funded school it must - but the circumstances of the school, ironically, create inequality in the case of choristers. It is not an ideal situation for a choir programme with boy choristers; Bristol Cathedral's choir is a subject to its circumstances.

Bristol Cathedral Choir School's government funding does create equality elsewhere, however. It is the mandate of the school rather than the cathedral that the girl and boy choristers have equal responsibilities in singing services. Over the length of an academic term, the boys and girls sing the same number of services. The girl choristers at Bristol Cathedral only began a few years before the academy was formed. It is unknown whether the girls would have risen to that level, or how long it would have taken them to do so, without the academy dictating that parity.

For boy choristers, age range is always a matter of immutable circumstance. Boys cannot remain trebles after their voice change, which will happen around the age of thirteen. If boys are given enough time as choristers (and without a policy such as can be found at Bristol's Choir School), the average at most cathedral is five or six years in the choir, starting the choristers at around age eight. As discussed, sometimes a parity between boy and girl chorister ages is due to practicality. Primarily it will be due to a plan to either set the girl choristers on equal footing to serve a goal of exact parity, or a plan to create a distinctive group of older girls.

#### **3.3.4. Recruitment**

In the majority of the cathedrals in this study, the boy and girl choristers are recruited in the same way. If there are differences in the recruitment style - Guildford and Ely are good examples - it is due to the different relationship with the school.

In many ways, recruitment is controlled by practicalities. For example: the catchment area of a school or the cathedral's location, which are tied to the status of the school as a day or boarding establishment. In Liverpool and Chester the lack of a school combined with the more urban locale of the cathedral has an impact on the catchment for the choristers. (Discussed further in 3.3.8.)

Cathedrals can control some of the recruitment effort and the decision to recruit girl choristers in the same way as boy choristers, or the decision to strategically recruit one in a different way from the other, can be manipulated to a certain extent.

Durham Cathedral is an example of recruitment dictated by circumstances. County Durham is not one of the most affluent socioeconomic areas in the country, and choristers are required to attend the choir school and to board there (with a significant tuition scholarship, but still a considerable financial investment).

To recruit for the boy and the girl choristers, the efforts had to be channelled through the school. To bring in choristers, prospective chorister parents must be sold on the quality of the school. A suitable number of chorister candidates can only be achieved in conjunction with a

suitable number of candidates to the school. If one fails, the other will also. In some ways the parity in recruitment process for girl and boy choristers is a matter of practicality which stemmed from a strategic plan for the structure of the girls' line. The cathedral had already decided on exact equality including the school and boarding of the girl choristers; unified recruitment is a side effect of that decision.

Durham Cathedral, like most cathedrals in this study, recruits at primary schools, looking for choristers entering their third or fourth year in school. Typical recruitment methods include: flyers given to schools, personal letters to heads of school and heads of music departments asking for gifted young musicians to come audition for the choir, newspaper adverts and radio spots. Many cathedrals utilise a 'Chorister Open Day' in which prospective choristers and their parents can come to the cathedral, experience a rehearsal, and sing with the cathedral's choristers at the end of the day in a special concert.

Bristol Cathedral, by contrast, cannot recruit for choristers at all due to academy regulations. No school visits, no leaflet drops to primary schools with strong music programmes, no collegial relationships with parish church choirs who send over a bright young chorister to try for the cathedral choir. Prospective choristers hear about Bristol Cathedral's choir by hearing about the school; leaflets go out to every primary school in the Bristol area, as well as in surrounding counties Somerset, Bath and Wells. Applicants to the school can express an interest in the choir, which is functionally just a part of the music specialism of the school.

### **3.3.5. Auditions**

In every cathedral in this study, the audition process for the boy choristers occurs in the same way as for the girl choristers. The directors and assistant directors of cathedral choirs are all looking for the same qualities in prospective choristers in order to train next year's group from a known starting point. The directors all related that they were looking for an excitement for music (several even used the exact phrase 'a spark in the eye'), a good starting point of aural skills, and the ability to repeat back a rhythm or a tune. Whilst directors may gauge these qualities in slightly different ways, these qualities are the same for boy choristers as well as for

girl choristers across the board - and indeed for many choirs whether for a school ensemble, a community choir, a professional ensemble, or university-level choral programme in any country.

Timing of auditions tends to be dictated by practicality. If a choir school is involved, the auditions for the choir are in January or February, when the school admissions for the following academic year are occurring. This is following a series of events - Chorister Open Days, pre-auditions - which serve to bring those prospective choristers with the greatest potential to the auditions for the sake of expediency on the actual audition day. This is true for Exeter, Salisbury, Bristol (slightly altered due to school regulations, discussed previously), Wells, Ely, York, and Durham. It is also true for the boys of Norwich Cathedral and the boys of Guildford Cathedral who, unlike the girl choristers in those institutions, attend a choir school.

If there is no choir school involved, the auditions are on a rolling basis (this was unanimous in the cathedrals in this study). Recruitment occurs year-round, and auditions may be specially planned for each prospective singer, or at several points throughout the year to group the most recent applicants. This is true for Liverpool, Southwark, the girl choristers of Guildford and the girl choristers of Norwich. Practicality dictates the distinctiveness between the girl and boy chorister audition period at Guildford and Norwich due to the chorister school/voluntary choristers disparity in those locations.

Audition processes occur in age-appropriate methods at all the cathedrals. For those cathedrals that recruit choristers - girls or boys - at age seven or eight years of age, the directors are all mindful that for such a young child, a cathedral choir audition may well be the most terrifying experience some of them have yet come across, so some degree of leniency is taken into account for nervous young ones.

The auditions themselves are a practical and direct route to the information needed to gauge the aforementioned 'spark', aural skills, and repetition skills. Across the board, directors cited methods including:

- Playing a tune and asking the prospective chorister to sing back the first note of it
- Playing a chord on the piano and asking for the prospective chorister to sing one note of it (difficulty based on age)
- Asking them to sing a prepared song, perhaps a well-known hymn

For those cathedrals that auditioned older girls, information such as the ABRSM grade level already achieved in music theory, singing, or another instrument would dictate the difficulty of the above. They may have a few bars of sight-singing as well. Sarah MacDonald's girl choristers at Ely were held to particularly high standards in auditions. The director is forthcoming about her goal of preparing her choristers to enter a university choir at the end of their chorister tenure, and is aware that she has only three or four years to prepare them for that goal. Choristers must have already have some musical achievement before they are admitted into the choir.

Perhaps there is an element of the planned in the audition process. That these auditions are in line with every choral audition I have ever encountered in a musical career speaks to the expediency and practicality of these auditions. One might be led to believe that using a completely different approach would be impractical or even futile; as a practising musician I struggle to imagine what could or should be done differently to achieve better results. The requisite skills are standardised through practice, the level of achievement for those skills is a sliding scale depending on the environment that singer may soon be entering, and the methods of gauging a singer's talent are the most direct route, with only minor divergences.

### **3.3.6. Treatment of Choristers**

In every cathedral in this study, the directors had similar comments about the behavioural differences of girl and boy choristers that affect how the director treats one set or another. The consensus amongst all the directors, unanimously, was that the girl choristers tended to be more sensitive to direct critique, whereas the boy choristers were a bit thicker-skinned with jokes and teasing.

Robert Sharpe, Director of Music at York Minster described these differences which he discovered when he took his post in 2008. When working with the boy choristers, ‘you can look down the line and say “can you start watching me, you’ve been looking right in your music all morning and you need to stop”. If you try that with a year 8 girl, she’ll burst into tears. They need more of “that was fantastic, brilliant, but what would really be good is if you give me your eyes just slightly more, it would make me happy”’

David Halls at Salisbury discovered much the same pattern with the boys and girls, and for him, he must be careful with his sense of humour, and carefully tailor that dynamic depending on which group he is with. His relationship with the choir is generally a more relaxed, friendly leadership; his self-deprecating and very dry witty humour is taken a bit better by the boys than by the girls. Like Sharpe, he can be more direct with the boys in his own way. If he jokingly points out one boy in front of the others, laughing that the boy is ‘dumb as a doornail’, the boys - including the butt of the joke - will laugh it off. The boy who was not paying attention will correct himself, and the rehearsal will move on. With the girls, similar banter would never happen. Of course, Halls is aware that from time to time a boy might be a bit more sensitive to that style of joke, and will not point him out in that manner.

At Wells Cathedral, Vaughn and Buzard discovered there were significant differences in treatment for the boy and girl choristers, which they attributed to the environment of the school, which was light on discipline, combined with the higher level of maturity of girls between ages eight and thirteen compared with the boys. With the boy choristers, they reported that strict discipline was necessary at every second. A director in front of the boy choristers could not give them one moment without strict supervision or the rehearsal would devolve into chatter and chaos. With the girls, they can be more engaging, ask them questions pertaining to the music, even relax for a minute whilst the girls are finding a different piece of music. When the choristers form ranks in the morning to walk to rehearsal, the level of focus and maturity of the girls is obvious; on one occasion two girl choristers approached me to apologise for the poor behaviour of the boys and to express their hope that the boys’ comportment did not reflect negatively on the whole choir.

### 3.3.7. Directors

In some cathedrals, practicalities dictate who will train the girl choristers or the boy choristers. Not every cathedral has the resources in place to have the same director for both, and then some might prefer to have separate directors but lack the resources to go in that direction as well.

At Exeter Cathedral, when the girls were first introduced, the Director of Music, Andrew Nethsinga, was conscious of the arguments that the boy choristers might become lazy or unfocused, and even lose interest in the choir if they felt their place in the cathedral was threatened by the girls. The director felt that by training the boys exclusively himself, as had always been done, and bringing in a different director of the girls, he would avoid the feared repercussions. Stephen Tanner, the Director of Music at the cathedral school and occasional organist for the cathedral, was brought in as the cathedral's Assistant Organist and given charge over the training of the girl choristers.

When Nethsinga left his post and Andrew Millington took up the Director of Music role at Exeter, it may have been possible to change the arrangement, but schedules dictated otherwise, and it would have been a far more complicated process to revise job descriptions. Millington filled the post just as Nethsinga left it.

At Ely Cathedral, due to the funding of the two cathedral choirs - one as a part of the Cathedral itself, and the girl choristers as a cathedral choir which is part of the school - there are two different sets of directors. The boys' choir has its own director and assistant director. The Girls choir has its own director and assistant. The salaries for the staff are paid from their different institutions. This arrangement does cause complications when any of the staff are absent, the rank of second in command of the musical life of the cathedral can become entailed - it may be Paul's assistant, or it may be Sarah MacDonald as director of the girls, who technically outranks an assistant director.

### 3.3.8. Choir School

The existence of a choir school can be a benefit; it is a practicality to be taken advantage of and made useful. If a cathedral does not have a choir school, it can also work to their advantage. Either way, the existence or lack of a choir school will shape the choral programme and has had an impact on the cathedrals in this study in regards to the parity or distinctiveness of the boy and girl choristers.

The cathedrals in this study without a choir school - Liverpool and Southwark - have made their situation work to their advantage.

At Liverpool Cathedral, the choristers come from over a dozen schools around the city. The boy and girl choristers are both paid a small amount towards their transportation costs if needed. There is a high rate of racial diversity in this choir, possibly owing to the range of schools and socioeconomic statuses of the choristers.

Southwark too lacks a choir school. Choristers take public transportation from all around London to get to rehearsals and services, only the youngest choristers in the boys' and girls' lines are brought to the cathedral by their parents.

At Guildford and Norwich however, the practicalities of their choir school create distinctiveness between the boy and girl choristers. The Lanesborough School in Guildford and the Norwich Cathedral Choir School are both male only independent schools. The girl choristers are voluntary, and are paid a small sum for their work at the cathedral.

The boy choristers at Guildford are a part of the Lanesborough School, and are paid in a scholarship for their work as choristers. It is a single-sex, independent day school. This one factor of the boys' existing choral scholarship shapes how the girl choristers can operate in a variety of ways. The girls cannot attend the Lanesborough School; instead they come from many local schools (the precise number varies from year to year, at time of research it was twelve). The distinctiveness in education is the result of circumstances of the choir school



rather than a philosophical belief of the cathedral's chapter that the girls should not be educated in the same way that the boys are.

### **3.3.9. Gesture**

As discussed in the methodology section, an aspect of a choral rehearsal to observe is the gesture of the conductor or director. The conducting style speaks to the relationship of the director to the choir, as well as the level of musicianship skills that choir has.

In every cathedral in this study, the directors utilised the same style of conducting for both the boys and the girls. There was no situation in which the director (who directs both boy and girl choristers) used a different style of conducting for one group than the other.

### **3.3.10. Parental Involvement**

Neither a matter of plan nor practicality, the issue of parental involvement does come into play in the structure of the choir in some cathedrals more so than others. In those cathedrals with choir schools, the parental involvement tends to lean more towards the normal parental involvement that schooling requires: transportation to and from, and the occasional extra activity or weekend occasion to transport. These cathedrals - York Minster, Salisbury, Durham, Bristol, Exeter - can of course call on parents to supply a tea time snack for a choir festival, and several parents might take in turns to be a choir mother or father if the staffing of the cathedral does not meet child protection requirements. The choir is almost an extension of school, and in terms of daily timetables, it is indeed an extension of the school day.

Some cathedrals rely heavily on the involvement of parents. Liverpool Cathedral and Guildford Cathedral credit the running of their choral programme to the vital parental help.

At Guildford, parents are involved with every aspect of the daily running of the cathedral. Whilst they are not decision makers, their presence is felt. They are on hand in rehearsal (on a rota) to care for choristers, to escort them to the toilets if needed, to monitor at break times, to relieve the music director and assistant director of non-musical adult duties.

Liverpool Cathedral has a similar system. Due to the lack of a music administrator, the administrative tasks as well as musical tasks fall to the director and assistant director. Already heavily-laden with those duties, the parents are responsible for making sure the choristers are all in the rehearsal room, help them to form lines and transport them from point a to point b in the cathedral safely. They are slightly less present than the parents at Guildford Cathedral; the rota involves only some of the parents who form a choir parents association for the purposes of aiding the work of the choir.

Southwark Cathedral, another in this study without a choir school, uses almost no parental involvement. The girl choristers are older, and the majority of them transport themselves using the ample public transport in London. At break times, the girls are old enough to not require great amount of parental involvement, the presence of the director is typically sufficient. Parents are involved only so far as to be invited to certain events of the choristers such as concerts.

It is interesting to look at these cathedrals and the pattern they suggest. Guildford Cathedral is not easily accessed via public transport for children. To get to the cathedral on the top of Stag Hill in Guildford, it is necessary for the vast majority of choristers to be transported by car. Even the boy choristers at Lanesborough School require transportation from school to cathedral. The parents of Guildford's choristers are already present; it is not a great journey to come into the cathedral and get involved with the choir.

Liverpool's parents are slightly less involved with transportation: a greater number of children can transport themselves to the cathedral with public transportation, and again the girls average at an older age and have more personal accountability. Likewise, at Southwark Cathedral in London, very few choristers are brought to the cathedral by parents, maybe only the youngest year or two years, and parental involvement is almost non-existent by design.

This might be attributed to the more urban environment versus a town or village environment. Cities provide ample opportunity for choristers to transport themselves to and from the

cathedral for rehearsals and services. Smaller towns rely on personal cars or parent escorts, especially for younger children.

#### 4. Conclusions

The structure of a cathedral's choir - and the provisions it makes for girl choristers - speaks to the goals of the cathedral in installing girl choristers into their music life. Every cathedral must operate within their resources - their budget, staffing, location, among many others - whilst keeping their goals in mind and taking care that current members of the choral fabric are not made to feel abandoned in favour of the novel.

Over the past 25 years, many cathedrals have integrated girls into their existing choral systems, with no guide, no sense of 'best practice' or tradition, essentially flying blind. The implicit social justice is commendable. Even of those cathedrals where the girls only sing once or twice in a month, it can be said that they are putting forth an effort to be more inclusive, and are possibly coming up against practicalities which will not allow for a more equal distribution of choral duties.

Based on the data in this study, several conclusions can be drawn.

##### 4.1. A Choral programme does not travel well

The structure of the choir seen in one cathedral cannot be replicated exactly into another cathedral. For all the planning and attempts to mimic another programme precisely, there will be distinctions based on environment, resources, staffing dynamics, and even the personalities of the staff and choristers which will have an impact on the choral programme's structure.

Some directors claim that their own choir feels like a different group of individuals based on the day of the week, the weather, or how far along in the academic year they may be. It is difficult to consider the same choir on a very focused and energised day and replicate that quality after the choristers have sat exams or just returned from a school trip. It would be impossible to replicate that choir in a new environment with a different set of choristers.

Take, for example, Liverpool Cathedral's girl choristers. One may recall that the hierarchy amongst the girls swayed the commitment levels for the younger ones who looked up to the

head choristers. The girl choristers, who only in the previous year were begging for more responsibilities and more services in the week, suddenly began to complain that two or three services in a week was too much. This is linked closely with the structure of the choir there: no choir school, a day choir with choristers from many different schools in a more urban environment, and the boy choristers maintain the bigger share of choral duties. Could one possibly attempt to replicate, for example, York Minster's choir there? Could one, metaphorically, pick up the infrastructure in York and drop it into place in Liverpool? The resources of these places are different, the environment, the people (both staff and choristers); it would be impossible.

#### **4.2. Practicalities can sometimes be overcome**

A cathedral must integrate girl choristers in a way that fits into their resources, the circumstances that cathedral may find themselves in, and many other practicalities, discussed earlier. It may be the intention that the new choir with two lines of trebles run a certain way, but the leadership are unable to reach that ideal vision, and must find an alternate route that is successful for them.

Several cathedrals in this study showed that there may be some practicalities that can be overcome with the right sort of planning and the right personality at the helm, and an indefatigable spirit to change the situation to match their ideal no matter how difficult that might be. For other cathedrals, the practicalities may have been enough to defeat the girl chorister initiative, but a serendipitous change of circumstances turns it around.

Durham Cathedral's girl chorister programme took some years to enact, and included building work and re-organising of the Chorister School boarding policies, as well as additional staff in both the musical department and the school itself. The cathedral's budget was overhauled and new scholarship rates determined. All of these changes loomed over the chapter for years just waiting for the right time, the right feeling amongst the leadership and an absolute desire to overcome these difficulties to achieve the goal of equality there.

Wells Cathedral, by contrast, forged ahead with the girl chorister line without enough prior planning on the financial side. Without a serious reworking of the choir's funds, the girl chorister line could have been scrapped altogether. A mistake was made, the leadership could have given up and allowed the initiative to fail, but they chose to envisage the choral structure in a new way that worked better for them.

#### **4.3. Equality for equality's sake**

There is nobility in the goal of exact equality between boy and girl choristers, but it is not always the best option or even a viable option for every cathedral. Lack of exact parity between girl and boy choristers is not necessarily a sexist argument: that cathedral's leadership may define *choristership* in a different way and achieve that definition to the fullest potential even if the boys sing four times per week to the girls' two.

The number of services that each line sings in a week may not be the main priority in every cathedral. It is for some, but other may define choristership as the range of chorister activities. Do the boys and the girls both sing regularly (more than once per week) as musical leaders of a worship service? Yes. Do the boys and the girls both record albums on occasion? Yes. Do the boys and the girls both go on tours on occasion? Yes. Do the boys and the girls both have the opportunity to broadcast evensong on BBC Radio? Yes. Do they both sing the same kind of repertoire to the same high standard? Yes. By this metric, a cathedral where the boys sing four services per week and the girls sing two could still say (rightly!) that the boys and girls are equally part of the Cathedral Choir.

#### **4.4. Directors' modes of thinking**

As seen in many of the cathedrals in this study, when the line of girl choristers was added, the director and assistant director had to make a significant change to their modes of thinking and organising as relates to the training of choristers. No longer was the director keeping a mental note of technical pitfalls, repertoire learning, each chorister's particular tone and contribution to the overall blend, and planning ahead for the learning of repertoire for just one choir, but this had to be doubled. This applies most obviously to the choirs where one director trains both

sets of choristers (assisted for logistical purposes by the assistant organist), but also applies to those cathedrals with two separate teams training the choristers. The directors still must come together and be aware of what the other line is doing for logistical and planning purposes.

At Exeter and Southwark, for example, the Director of Music takes the training of the boys and the assistant director of music takes on the training of the girls. But the assistant, in both of these cathedrals, accompanies for the boys' line, and the director accompanies for the girls' line. A hefty amount of co-ordination and trust between the two leaders must be present in this system, and a sharp memory for where each group is in terms of music learning.

For some cathedral directors, this change in thinking and planning may be enough of a stumbling block that the director is unable to support the addition of a second line of choristers. This may be due to the director's personality, organisation, and management style, which for the most part cannot be helped. Additionally, that director was hired with a specific job description, and they accepted the post on the basis that they felt able to fulfil that role. Directing two lines of choristers is very different from directing one line, and one could hardly judge a director for being wary of such a shift to his or her workload.

#### **4.5. Custodians of the Tradition**

What of the leadership that have yet to allow girls into the choral tradition of the English cathedral? Many of the directors in this study cited the same initial apprehension: that including girl choristers into the choir would tarnish the centuries-old tradition of boy choristers. Perhaps the boys would no longer feel that they were wanted or important in the choir, or that choir would suddenly no longer feel like a *boys' activity* when they saw that girls were singing too. These fears have yet to come to light in any of these cathedrals, but they are certainly valid.

The leadership of these cathedrals (the Dean, the precentor, the chapter, the director of music, and other music staff) are in many ways the custodians of the tradition of English cathedral music. It is understandable to worry about what may happen to this gem of English heritage on their watch, as a result of their decisions. Any change to the structure of the English cathedral

choir should merit serious consideration, research, and exploration as to the possible route one may take. Who wouldn't be apprehensive about the possible negative consequences of these decisions? The leadership of the cathedrals that currently train a line of girl choristers and boy choristers certainly took a leap of faith.

#### **4.6. Limitations and Further Study Opportunities**

This thesis pertains to girl choristers in the English Cathedrals, including how the choir is run and how the new line of choristers fits into the cathedral's life and work. If time and resources permitted, this research could have been expanded to include implications in other areas.

There is insufficient data to delve fully into the impact that the director's gender has on the training of boy versus girl choristers. There are two women directors included in this study (Sarah MacDonald at Ely Cathedral and Katherine Dienes-Williams at Guildford Cathedral) and a female sub-organist who undertakes training duties for the choristers on a regular basis (Francesca Massey at Durham Cathedral). Whilst one could possibly take these three women as a small comparison study, it would be inappropriate to do so. They direct choirs of different age groups, they are themselves of different ages which may effect the dynamic between a director of any gender and a group of young singers, and come from different backgrounds and cultures (one English, one New Zealander, one Canadian). These, among many other factors, would taint any study which attempted to compare and contrast them simply due to the fact that they are female in a field dominated by men. Whilst an interesting topic, there is simply not enough data available to dedicate a study to it.

As touched on in the introductory section of this thesis, this study could have extended to more cathedrals - including those cathedrals that have girls singing on a more voluntary basis, that is, maybe only one or two times per month. There are cathedrals of that sort, and girls do add to those cathedrals' musical lives and offerings. Practicality and resources hindered me from visiting those cathedrals. The research time involved limited the number of cathedrals I could visit. Some cathedrals that installed girl choristers rather recently may not have got the girls up to their full level of responsibilities yet and it was too soon to record accurate data of how the girls would be fitting in to the cathedral's life. Some cathedrals had shifts to their choir's



structure or frequent changes in leadership, which made planning a research visit rather difficult, Peterborough and Ripon are good examples here. Some I was limited by sheer geography; it is incredibly difficult, for example, to organise a visit to St David's Cathedral in Wales when limited to public transport only.

Since the culmination of my period of data collection, other cathedrals have included a line of girl choristers - Canterbury in 2014, and Truro beginning in 2015 (announced 2014). Still more cathedrals may have restructured their programmes or incorporated the girl choristers more fully. The research could have carried on for a significantly longer period of time simply on the data collection, as every cathedral changes. Updating the research *ad infinitum* could very well double the volume of data and make production of a thesis impossible.

There are two cathedrals I left out because they did not fit in to the criteria of this research but are fascinating and I wish that there had been more time to study in depth. These are Manchester Cathedral and St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh. These two cathedral choirs are different because they combine their top line of boys and girls into one treble line and have done since the 1970's, long before an independent line of girl choristers was established at Salisbury. The girls and boys sing together. This is possible in part because these cathedrals take their choristers from elite musical training schools - Chetham's in Manchester and St Mary's Music School in Edinburgh. These schools provide rigorous musical training for young people, similar to a conservatoire environment. In some ways, the cathedral duties are an extension not of their status as choristers, but of their status as pupils at the school. If one thinks of evensong as the last lesson of the school day, and the trebles are the pupils, it is logical then to have a mixed gender top line just like any other class at school. But this arrangement is radically different from other cathedrals, even those with choir schools.

This data could be analysed with different implications in academic study. For instance, one could investigate the impact that feminist theory has on the girl chorister initiatives (or vice versa). One could also look at the chorister programmes from a music education and pedagogy standpoint, and how the chorister education folds into current educational philosophy with both genders. One could also investigate the girl and boy chorister question with a view to

hypothesise about vocal development, physiological issues of singing with regards to each gender, or even the style of singing and the teaching of healthy vocal habits for choristers.

Possible areas of parallel research include the use of girls in parish church choirs, extending the methodology in the same way. A similar enquiry into local school choirs or community choirs could have used the same methodology. Or removing the musical aspect and remaining in the cathedral, recruitment of servers or acolytes could be examined in a future study.

#### 4.6. A Final Word

In the “Letters” of the October 2000 edition of *Cathedral Music*, a member comments on an article in the previous edition deploring the existence of girl choristers. This member, who identifies as Mrs J Glazier, a parent of a girl chorister, writes:

‘The appearance of girl choristers in the choir stalls would not offend 99% of the population and however much some may wish to live in the land of the 1%, surely cathedrals must learn to live in the present and not the past. This should not mean ditching the traditions of the past but neither must [the cathedral] be a splendid ostrich, avoiding the existence of the world outside the great west door’.<sup>183</sup>

---

<sup>183</sup> Glazier, J., *Cathedral Music*, (Letter), 2/2000. pp. 47-48.

## Quick Reference Tables

**Table 13: School Years and Corresponding Ages**

<b>Infant School</b>	<b>Age</b>
Prep	4-5
Year 1	5-6
Year 2	6-7
<b>Junior or Primary School</b>	<b>Age</b>
Year 3	7-8
Year 4	8-9
Year 5	9-10
Year 6	10-11
<b>Senior or Secondary School</b>	<b>Age</b>
Year 7	11-12
Year 8	12-13
Year 9	13-14
Year 10	14-15
Year 11	15-16
6 <sup>th</sup> Form - Lower Sixth	16-17
6 <sup>th</sup> Form - Upper 6th	17-18

**Table 14: Salisbury Cathedral**

Director	David Halls
Asst. Director	Daniel Cook
Dates Observed	6-12 April 2009; 7-12 March 2011
Girls starting year	1991
Founding director	Richard Seal
Girls # (notional)	16
Girls years	Probationers in year 4, choristers in years 5,6,7,8
Boys # (notional)	16
Boys years	Probationers in year 4, choristers in years 5,6,7,8
Girls services/wk	equal with boys over a term
Boys services/wk	equal with girls over a term
Choir school?	Salisbury Cathedral Choir School
Boarding?	Optional

**Table 15: York Minster**

Director	Robert Sharpe
Asst. Director	David Pipe
Dates Observed	in residence October 2011
Girls starting year	1995
Founding director	Philip Moore
Girls # (notional)	20
Girls years	Probationers yr 3, choristers in years 4,5,6,7,8
Boys # (notional)	20
Boys years	8 to 13
Girls services/wk	4
Boys services/wk	4
Choir school?	The Minster School
Boarding?	(Day School)

**Table 16: Durham Cathedral**

Director	James Lancelot
Asst. Director	Francesca Massey: sub-organist since 2011 David Ratnanayagam: assistant organist since 2012
Dates Observed	17-19 November 2010, 28-30 November 2012
Girls starting year	2009
Founding director	James Lancelot
Girls # (notional)	20
Girls years	Probationers yr 3, choristers in years 4,5,6,7,8
Boys # (notional)	20
Boys years	Probationers yr 3, choristers in years 4,5,6,7,8
Girls services/wk	4
Boys services/wk	4
Choir school?	The Chorister School
Boarding?	Required by non-probationers

**Table 17: Bristol Cathedral**

Director	Mark Lee
Asst. Director	Paul Walton
Dates observed	27 Feb - 1 March 2011
Girls starting year	1993
Founding director	Mark Lee
Girls # (time of research)	18
Girls years	Years 7-10
Boys # (time of research)	14
Boys years	Years 7-voice break (usually year 8 or 9)
Girls services/wk	equal with boys over a term (weekly may vary)
Boys services/wk	equal over a term (weekly may vary)
Choir school?	Bristol Cathedral Choir School
Boarding?	(Day School)

**Table 18: Ely Cathedral Girls' Choir**

Director	Sarah MacDonald
Asst. Director	Oliver Hancock
Dates observed	24-27 April 2012
Girls starting year	2006
Founding director	Louise Reid
Girls # (notional)	20
Girls years	Years 9 to 13, three or four girls of each year
Boys # (notional)	22
Boys years	Years 4 to 8
Girls services/wk	Approx. 2/wk
Boys services/wk	Approx. 6/wk
Choir school?	King's School
Boarding?	Required



**Table 19: Guildford Cathedral**

Director	Katherine Dienes-Williams
Asst. Director	Paul Provost
Dates Observed	11-14 June 2011
Girls starting year	2002
Founding director	Stephen Farr
Girls # (time of research)	20
Girls ages	age 10 to 16
Boys #(time of research)	16
Boys ages	age 7 to 13
Girls services/wk	2
Boys services/wk	4 or 5
Choir school?	Lanesborough - only for the boys
Boarding?	(Day School)

**Table 20: Liverpool Cathedral**

Director	David Poulter
Asst. Director	Daniel Bishop
Dates Observed	8-10 December 2010
Girls starting year	2004
Founding director	Ian Tracey
Girls # (time of research)	28
Girls years	year 5 through 10
Boys # (time of research)	30
Boys years	years 4-8
Girls services/wk	2 or 3 (alternating) no more than 4 ever
Boys services/wk	5 or 6
Choir school?	no
Boarding?	n/a

**Table 21: Norwich Cathedral Girls Choir**

Director	Ashley Grote
Asst. Director	David Dunnett
Dates Observed	26-28 Feb 2013
Girls starting year	1995
Girls' Founding Director	Neil Taylor
Girls # (notional)	20
Girls years/ages	Aged 11 to 18
Boys #	20
Boys years/ages	Aged 8 to 13
Girls services/wk	1 or 2
Boys services/wk	5
Choir school?	Norwich School - only for boys
Boarding?	(Day School)

**Table 22: Exeter Cathedral**

Director	Andrew Milington
Asst. Director	Stephen Tanner
Dates Observed	4-7 March 2011
Girls starting year	1994
Founding director	Stephen Tanner
Girls #	18
Girls ages	Age 8-13
Boys #	18
Boys ages	Age 8-13
Girls services/wk	3
Boys services/wk	5
Choir school?	Exeter Cathedral School
Boarding?	Optional

**Table 23: Southwark Cathedral**

Director	Peter Wright
Asst. Director	Stephen Disley
Dates observed	14-16 June 2011
Girls starting year	2000
Founding director	Stephen Disley
Girls # (notionally)	24+
Girls ages	Age 10 or 11 through 17
Boys # (notionally)	24+
Boys ages	Aged 7-10, through voice change
Girls services/wk	2
Boys services/wk	4
Choir school?	No
Boarding?	n/a

**Table 24: Wells Cathedral**

Director (starting year)	Matthew Owens
Asst. Director	Jonathan Vaughn
Dates Observed	1-4 March 2011
Girls starting year	1994
Founding director	Malcolm Archer
Girls # (notional)	18
Girls ages	8 to 13
Boys # (notional)	18
Boys .ages	8 to 13
Girls services/wk	3
Boys services/wk	5
Choir school?	Wells Cathedral School
Boarding?	Optional

## Bibliography

### Web Sites

- Archbishops Council, 'About the General Synod', <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/general-synod.aspx> (accessed 1 Dec 2014).
- Archbishops Council, 'Diocese Map', <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/dioceses.aspx> (accessed 1 Dec 2014).
- Archbishops Council, 'The Structure of the Church of England', <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure.aspx> (accessed 1 Dec 2014).
- Bristol Cathedral Choir School, 'Academy Introduction', <http://www.bccs.bristol.sch.uk/Home/Prospectus/About-BCCS/Academy-Introduction> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).
- Bristol Cathedral, 'Regular Services', <http://bristol-cathedral.co.uk/faith-worship/regular-services/> (accessed 09 Dec 2014).
- Campaign for the Traditional Cathedral Choir, 'Introduction', <http://www.ctcc.org.uk/intro.htm> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).
- Choir Schools Association, 'About the Choir Schools Association', <http://www.choirschools.org.uk/the-choir-schools-association/> (accessed 10 Feb 2012).
- Dean and Chapter of York Minster, 'Chapter of York', <http://www.yorkminster.org/about-us/chapter-of-york.html> (accessed 10 Feb 2012).
- Dean and Chapter of York Minster, 'York Minster: Worship', <http://www.yorkminster.org/worship-and-choir/worship.html> (accessed 31 Dec 2014).
- Ely Cathedral, 'Ely Cathedral Girls' Choir', <http://www.elycathedral.org/worship-music/ely-cathedral-girls-choir> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).
- English Heritage, 'Liverpool Cathedral List Entry: 1361681', <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1361681> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).
- Exeter Cathedral, 'Community: Our People', <http://www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk/communities/people/chapter-members.ashx> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).
- Exeter Cathedral, 'Be a Chorister For Real', [http://www.exetercs.org/\\_assets/pdf/chorister/14.10.14voicetrials2014.pdf](http://www.exetercs.org/_assets/pdf/chorister/14.10.14voicetrials2014.pdf) (accessed 4 May 2015).
- Guildford Cathedral, 'Previous Organists' <https://www.guildford-cathedral.org/music/organists/previous> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).
- Liverpool Cathedral, 'Rehearsals & Services', <http://www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk/about/the-choir/choristers.aspx> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

Salisbury Cathedral, 'A New Start: Building the Cathedral', <http://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/history/new-start-building-cathedral> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

Salisbury Cathedral, 'Regular Service Times' <http://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/worship-music-services/regular-service-times> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

Salisbury Cathedral, 'The Cathedral Chapter', <http://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/about-us/cathedral-chapter> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

Salisbury Cathedral, 'The Cathedral Choir', <http://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/worship-music-choirs/cathedral-choir> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

Saunders, A.E., 'The voices of boy and girl cathedral choristers - Is there a perceptible difference? And does it matter?' 4 April 2009 <http://www.ctcc.org.uk/Website%20article%20000.pdf> (accessed 2 Jan 2015).

Southwark Cathedral, 'Cathedral Community: Who's Who', <http://cathedral.southwark.anglican.org/contactus/#whoswho> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

Southwark Cathedral, 'Visit Us: History and Architecture', <http://cathedral.southwark.anglican.org/visit/history-and-architecture> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).

The Association of English Cathedrals, 'Cathedral and Bishop', <http://www.englishcathedrals.co.uk/cathedrals/about-cathedrals/cathedral-and-bishop/> (accessed 1 Dec 2014).

The Association of English Cathedrals, 'How is it Administered?', <http://www.englishcathedrals.co.uk/cathedrals/about-cathedrals/how-is-it-administered/> (accessed 1 Dec 2014).

The Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 'History of Durham Cathedral', <http://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/heritage/history-of-durham-cathedral> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

The Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 'Music Outreach Programme', <http://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/worshipandmusic/music-outreach-programme> (accessed 09 Dec 2014).

The Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 'The Organists', <http://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/worshipandmusic/organists> (accessed 09 Dec 2014).

The Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 'Venue Hire', <http://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/visit/venue-hire> (accessed 09 Dec 2014).

The Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 'Welcome to the Chorister School: About Our School', <http://www.thechoristerschool.com/about-our-school/> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

The Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 'Worship and Music', <http://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/worshipandmusic> (accessed 08 Dec 2014).

UK Government, 'Types of School: Academies - GOV.UK', entry posted 12 Nov 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).



- University of Cambridge, 'People in Chapel: Selwyn College', <http://www.sel.cam.ac.uk/selwyn-college/chapel-choir/people-chapel/> (accessed 10 Dec 2014).
- Wells Cathedral, 'Choristers', <http://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/music-the-choir/choristers/> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).
- Wells Cathedral, 'General Services and Calendar', <http://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/worship/general-services-calendar/> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).
- Wells Cathedral, 'Scissor Arches'. <http://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/history/historical-highlights/scissor-arches/> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).
- Wells Cathedral, 'The Chapter', <http://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/whos-who-contact/the-cathedral-chapter/> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).
- Wells Cathedral, 'The Clock', <http://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/history/historical-highlights/the-clock/> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).
- Wells Cathedral, 'Wells Cathedral Chorister Trust', <http://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/music-the-choir/wells-cathedral-chorister-trust/> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).

## Books

- Ashley, M., *How High Should Boys Sing: Gender, Authenticity and Credibility in the Young Male Voice* (Farnham, 2009).
- Aylmer, G.E., and R. Cant (eds.), *A History of York Minster* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).
- Broughton, L., *Interpreting Ely Cathedral* (Ely Cathedral Publications, 2008) pp. 1-13.
- Bumpus, T. Francis, *The Cathedrals of England and Wales* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1926).
- Cook, G. H., *The English Cathedral through the Centuries* (London: Phoenix House, 1957).
- Donovan, J., *Feminist Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (New York: Continuum, 2004) pp. 183-221.
- Harvey, J., *Cathedrals of England and Wales* (London: Batsford, 1974).
- Jones, K., L.A. Hampson, and R. Shephard, *York Minster: A Living Legacy*, (Third Millennium Publishing, 2008).
- Mould, A., *The English Chorister: A History* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007).
- Murray, J. (ed.), *Handbook to the Cathedrals of England*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1869)
- Quirk, Howard E., *The Living Cathedral: St. John the Divine: A History and Guide* (New York: Crossroad, 1993). pp. 15-16.
- Wall, J., *Durham Cathedral* (London: JM Dent and Sons Ltd., 1930).

## Cathedral Publications

- 'Grant That What We Sing with Our Lips...', *News from Durham Cathedral*, Winter 2009, p. 3.
- 'View from the Pew', *News from Durham Cathedral*, Summer 2010, p. 10.
- Exeter Cathedral, 'The Cathedral Church of St Peter in Exeter' (Leaflet) 2010.
- Halls, D., 'Salisbury Cathedral Chorister Handbook', 2011. (Unpublished).
- Hill, B., 'The Organisation of Music in Cathedrals in the United Kingdom', (Cathedral Organists Association, 1993).
- Salisbury Cathedral, 'The Choristers of Salisbury Cathedral' (Leaflet) 2010.
- The Choristers of Salisbury Cathedral* dir. David Halls. Performed by Salisbury Cathedral Choir (DVD) 2010.

## Articles, Essays, News, and Periodicals

- Barratt, M., 'On being and becoming a cathedral chorister: A cultural psychology account of the acquisition of early musical expertise', in M. Barratt (ed.) *A Cultural Psychology of Music Education* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Campbell, D., 'Mental health of children and young people at risk in digital age', *The Guardian* 4 November 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/nov/05/children-cyberbullying-self-harm-gaming-mps-concern> (accessed 11 November 2014).
- Dodd, C., 'Interview: Superior Mother', *The Times*, 14 Feb 2004 <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/health/article1787310.ece>. (accessed 8 Dec 2014).
- Eaglesham, L.E., 'In Defense of a Great Tradition', <http://www.ctcc.org.uk/In%20Defence%20of%20a%20Great%20Tradition.pdf> (accessed 1 Jan 2015).
- Glazier, J., *Cathedral Music*, (Letter), 2/2000, pp. 47-48.
- Gledhill, R., 'Women clergy to be made temporary 'bishops' by Church of England', *The Times*, 7 Feb 2013 <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/faith/article3681671.ece>. (accessed 8 Dec 2014).
- Howard, D. and Graham Welch, 'Female Chorister Voice Development: a Longitudinal Study at Wells, UK', *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, Spring & Summer 2002 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40319142> (accessed 2 Jan 2015).
- Howard, D. and Graham Welch, 'Gendered Voice in the Cathedral Choir', *Psychology of Music*, 2002 <http://pom.sagepub.com/content/30/1/102.refs.html> (accessed 19 Nov 2014).

- Howard, D., et al., 'Vocal Production and Listener Perception of Trained English Cathedral Boy and Girl Choristers', *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, Winter 2001/2001, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40319392> (accessed 19 Nov 2014).
- Howard, D. and John E Szymanski, 'Listener perception of girls and boy in an English cathedral choir', *Proceedings of 6th International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition*, Keele University (2000) <http://www.escom.org/proceedings/ICMPC2000/Sun/Howard.htm> (accessed 10 May 2015).
- Kay, Graeme, review of *A Year At York*, dir. Robert Sharpe, *Choir and Organ*, Nov 2011.
- Saunders, T., 'Girls and Women, and the Choral Tradition of the English Cathedral', *Cathedral Music*, 2/2000.
- The Radio 3 Forum, 'CE York Minster 29 June 2011', posted 29 June 2011 <http://www.for3.org/forums/showthread.php?2473-CE-York-Minster-29th-June-2011&highlight=CE+York+Minster> (accessed 10 Feb 2012).
- United Kingdom, Parliament, *Equality Act 2010: Elizabeth II. Part 6 Chapter 1*. (London: Stationery Office, 2010).
- Welch, G., 'Culture and Gender in a Cathedral Music Context', in M. Barratt (ed.) *A Cultural Psychology of Music Education* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Williams, Jenevora, 'The implications of intensive singing training on the vocal health and development of boy choristers in an English cathedral choir', (PhD thesis, Institute of Education, University of London, 2010).

## Interviews

- Beney, Adrian. Interviewed by the author. 26 November 2012.
- Cunnold, Judith. Interviewed by the author. 2 November 2011.
- Dienes-Williams, Katherine. Interviewed by the author. 12 June 2011.
- Disley, Stephen. Interviewed by the author. 20 June 2014.
- Grote, Ashley. Interviewed by the author. 26 February 2013.
- Halls, David. Interviewed by the author. 10 March 2011.
- Haselock, Jeremy. Interviewed by the author. 27 February 2013.
- Lancelot, James. Interviewed by the author. 19 November 2010.
- Lee, Mark. Interviewed by the author. 28 February 2011.
- MacDonald, Sarah and Oliver Hancock. Interviewed by the author. 25 April 2012
- Massey, Francesca. Interviewed by the author via e-mail. 17 March 2013.
- Millington, Andrew. Interviewed by the author. 5 March 2011.
- Moger, Peter. Interviewed by the author. 10 May 2011.

Moore, Philip. Interviewed by the author. 11 May 2011.

Poulter, David. Interviewed by the author. 9 December 2010.

Sharpe, Robert. Interviewed by the author. 10 May 2011.

Shephard, Richard. Interviewed by the author. 3 October 2011.

Tanner, Stephen. Interviewed by the author. 5 February 2011.

Vaughn, Jonathan and Stephen Buzard. Interviewed by the author. 4 March 2011.