Notes on the music list for Michaelmas term 2026.

Over the coming weeks we will be performing English mass settings by composers such as John Stainer, Thomas Tertius Noble, Edward Bairstow, and Basil Harwood. This is quite different to any other year of my tenure, but it is to celebrate the works of Composers linked to Charles Wood. As you can imagine, there is a lineage of British composers through either musical influences or teachers. As we are coming to the end of our year of celebration of Wood, this gave me the opportunity to research a glorious strand of choral music, starting with the father of great English settings, Edward Elgar. From there the term unfolds, and ends, unsurprisingly, with a good quantity of Wood's wonderful Anthems.

October the 4th. We begin with Byrd's *Mass for Five Voices*, which we have only done once before in my tenure, and the last time we did it was in Advent when we sang the *Kyrie* and not the *Gloria.* This is my first opportunity to conduct the Mass with the *Gloria, Sanctus and Benedictus, and the Agnus dei.* Sometimes we are asked to split the Sanctus and the Benedictus if we are singing a Renaissance or Tudor setting of the mass, as they can be a little bit too long. We have quite a contrasting communion anthem. Anthems on a Harvest theme can be hard to find as there are not a huge number written. However, this week we are performing one specifically written for Harvest, and specifically written, as it says, for parochial choirs(!) by Edward Elgar.

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October the 11th: We are singing three different Mass settings by John Stainer. who was of course Director of Music and organist at this church from 1861. I have had to construct this setting as there does not exist one by Stainer that is appropriate to our Liturgy. I have taken the *Gloria* from his Communion Service in Eb, the *Sanctus and Benedictus* from his Mass for Four voices (which are his harmonisations of Meerbeck's setting), and finally the *Agnus dei* from his Morning Service in F. The Anthem is *Rejoice in the Lord*, the wonderful uplifting Tudor anonymous setting, which is chosen for this day to reflect the Philippians reading.

For Evensong we begin with *Ubi Caritas* by Duruflé; Rose Responses, and the Canticles are by Ireland, set in F major. We also sing *Greater love hath no man* by Ireland as well. A glorious selection of early 20th century composers, all writing wonderful music.

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On October the 18th for the Feast of Saint Luke we will perform the *Short Communion Service in A and E major* by Thomas Tertius Noble (1867 – 1953), an English-born organist and composer, who lived in the United States for the latter part of his career. Like Charles Wood, he won a scholarship to attend the Royal College of Music, where he was tutored by Walter Parratt, Charles Villiers Stanford and Frederick Bridge, and made other close connections with George Grove and our very own John Stainer. For the Anthem we will be performing, and I'm very proud of this, *Peace be to this house* by Thomas Howarth, my son, who wrote this piece when he was in his final year at New College School. It was premiered by the choir there in July 2023. The words reflect the appointed reading from Luke today in which, in chapter 10:5 the text is "Whatever house you enter, first say, peace to this house". Whilst this is only a short reflective anthem, it should beautifully enhance the mood of the Communion.

At Evensong, the Introit is by Tallis, the Responses by Smith, the Canticles by Gibbons, and an Evensong Anthem by Farrant. This is chosen as a contrast to last week's 20th century Evensong, as I do enjoy a good Tudor Evensong to reflect The Book of Common Prayer, and its connections to our Church.

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October the 25th, Dedication Festival, our Choral Eucharist Mass setting is the *Holy Communion in D* by Edward Bairstow (1874 – 1946). He studied the organ with John Farmer at Balliol College, Oxford. He served as organist of York Minster from 1913 to his death, when he was succeeded by his former pupil Francis Jackson (more of whom later this term). His predecessor at York was Thomas Tertius Noble whose setting we heard last week. As is now tradition, for the Anthem we will be performing Anton Bruckner's *Locus iste:* "This place was made by God, a priceless mystery, it is beyond reproach".

For Evensong we are performing an Introit by Christopher Tye, which reflects on the theme of dedication. The Responses are once again by Rose, and the setting of the Canticles are by EJ Moeran. He is an Anglo-Irish composer that I came across when I was 17. He writes in a similar sort of vein to Ralph Vaughan Williams and the English Musical Renaissance, but never quite with his fame. He was very influenced by Irish folk music, and he too studied at the RCM under Stanford. To round off this service of glorious British music, we have the apt Anthem for Dedication, Purcell's - *I was glad.*, words from Psalm 122.

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November the 1st, All Saints Sunday, for Choral Eucharist we will sing the *Holy Communion in Ab* Service by Basil Harwood (1859 – 1949). In 1876, Harwood

won a scholarship to Trinity College, Oxford. In 1892 he was appointed organist of Christ Church Cathedral until his retirement in 1909. During his time in Oxford, he became the first conductor of the Oxford Bach Choir. He held the position of Precentor of Keble College, and he edited The Oxford Hymn Book. For the Anthem, we perform *Gaudeamus omnes in Domino* by William Byrd, taken from his Gradualia, book 1, number 29. Published in 1605, written as an introit for the feast of All Saints.

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November the 8th, Remembrance Sunday we will be performing a setting of the Requiem; the *Missa pro defunctis* by J Esquivel Barahona (c. 1560 – after 1623) a contemporary of Victoria., although his influences are said to be Cristóbal de Morales and Francisco Guerrero. We have performed Victoria's Requiem every year since I began at St Mary's, and this year I felt it was time to ring the changes. That setting is paired with *Hear my prayer*, by Henry Purcell. This is such a *cri de cœur*. It is interesting to note that in the original manuscript for this Anthem, Purcell has left sixteen pages blank. It makes you wonder if what we have is unfinished.

We begin our Evensong with Purcell's *Hear my prayer* that we ended the morning service with. We have the Rose Responses, and we have unaccompanied Canticles by Francis Jackson. For our anthem, we have Ralph Vaughan Williams' wonderful *Valiant for truth*, which has been the favourite of mine over the years for Remembrance Sunday. I think it is the first time we are putting it into the Evensong rather than having it in our morning service.

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November the 15th Second Sunday before Advent, we revisit Byrd's *Five Part Mass.* For the Anthem we have a little bit more Charles Wood to fit in*: Jesu, the very thought*, reflects on the Thessalonians reading from chapter 5:1-11 "whereas God has destined for us obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ". The text that Charles Wood sets is "Jesu! the very thought is sweet; In that dear name all heart-joys meet".

At Evensong we have our Introit – *E'en so, Lord Jesus quickly come* – Paul Manz (1919 – 2009), which is a glorious Advent approaching anthem. We have my favourite Responses by Smith, and the anthem *Never weather-beaten sail* by Charles Wood, which often repeats the text "O come quickly", a sentiment that we hear throughout Advent.

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November the 22nd Christ the King, happens also to be on the Feast Day for Saint Cecilia, the patron Saint of Musicians, we are singing the *Missa brevis* by Healy Willan (1880 – 1968). We have performed other mass settings by him initially at the behest of The Reverend Canon Judith Maltby, but the reason we are having some more here is because, not only does it work with our theme of Mass settings this term, but also this Christmas we will use his music in our Carol services. The Anthem is by Charles Wood so we can round off our year of celebration of Wood's music on St Cecilia's day, alongside the end of the Christian liturgical year.

For Evensong we open with Byrd's *O Rex Gloria.* We also sing his setting of the Responses. Staying in the Tudor mindset, the Canticles are by Farrant, but to finish our Evensong series, as the next week is the Advent Carols, we have an anthem by Matthias (1934 – 1992). We crown off our Trinity Sunday celebrations always with Matthias (a British Welsh composer) who certainly inspired me when I was a young chorister.

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November the 29th Advent Sunday is our last Sunday of Term, and we finish our year as we began it with a Mass setting by Charles Wood, his *Mass in C minor*. To finish the year of Anthems, we are performing Josquin's *Praeter rerum seriem.* This was regularly part of our Advent Carol service, but it hasn't appeared there for the last couple of years. Therefore, I am bringing it, into our Morning Service for the first time; freeing up more space in our Advent Carols for later that day.

Thank you all. Please do grab me after any service if you would like more thoughts or information about our music. I am grateful to my wonderful choir for the hard work they contribute to our services. We don't have much time to prepare each week, yet they bring lustre and passion to the pieces I place before them.

My thanks also to James Brown in the organ loft, who does such amazing work. Not all organists control our unique instrument so well! And also, my thanks to Sam for keeping me on the straight and narrow, and to Gemma for her tireless work in the library.

Robert Howarth