



Welcomed with open arms: Girl choristers at St Davids Cathedral

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of BA with
Honours in Music in the University of Bristol.

MUSI30058

17th May 2021

1831062

Word count: 9,995

Abstract

This dissertation investigates the introduction and recruitment of girl choristers at St Davids Cathedral in West Wales in 1966 almost thirty years before Salisbury Cathedral who claimed to be the first to recruit girl choristers in 1991. I initially undertake an oral history of how girls came to sing at St Davids, using primary resources and a series of interviews to establish the impact this decision had on choir and community. I ask why historians and academics have ignored such a seismic shift in the choral tradition in a decade where girl choristers were virtually unheard of. Using composer Sir Nicholas Jackson as a case study, I examine whether the repertoire for St Davids Cathedral Choir was impacted by the predominantly female treble line. Several studies exist examining the difference in perception of a boy and girl treble voice, but there has been little focus on the repertoire itself. Finally, through examining the positive and negative aspects of the choral foundation at St Davids Cathedral in the present day, I assess whether this presents St Davids with a unique culture. The girl choristers continue to be the principal treble line of St Davids Cathedral Choir, but this has also resulted in the dwindling of the boy chorister tradition. The legacy of the decision made by musical director Peter Boorman and others in the 1960s is shown through the strength of musicianship and professionalism of girl choristers at St Davids Cathedral.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to former girl choristers Jane Leggett, Andrea Taylor and Pat Ginty for sharing their history with me. To Adrian and Arnold Boorman for sharing such wonderful memories of their father and of their time in St Davids Cathedral Choir. A very special thank you to Rosalyn Charles who has been inspirational when sharing fond memories of the musical life at Ysgol Dewi Sant and St Davids Cathedral. Rosalyn's work attributes to the strength of the musical bond between school and cathedral that continues to exist in the present day. Thank you to all those who have shared their memories of such a momentous occasion.

I would like to thank Sarah MacDonald of Ely Cathedral, librarian Mari Evans of St Davids Cathedral and Ben Phillips for their help with my research. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of staff, clergy and choir at St Davids Cathedral who have taken the time to share their experiences of the musical life of the cathedral in the present day. I cannot thank my dissertation supervisor Emma Hornby enough for her advice and guidance. I would not have been able to complete this dissertation without her support. Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends who have been encouraging and supportive throughout. Thank you to you all.

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: The introduction of girls to St Davids Cathedral Choir.....	3
Chapter 2: Writing for girls' voices at St Davids: Sir Nicholas Jackson.....	10
Chapter 3: Balancing boy and girl trebles at St Davids Cathedral.....	21
Conclusion.....	26
Bibliography.....	27
Appendix 1: Interviews.....	30
Appendix 2: South Wales Evening Post Article 1966.....	84
Appendix 3: Cymdeithas Gerdd Ysgol Dewi Sant Leaflet.....	86

Introduction

In this dissertation I explore the introduction of girl choristers at St Davids Cathedral in the 1960s and the implications that that has had for the cathedral's musical culture. Following this historic decision, St Davids Cathedral have continued to use girl choristers as their principal treble line. I investigate whether the presence of a female treble line has influenced the repertoire composed for St Davids Cathedral Choir. The strength of the girl chorister tradition continues in the present day; therefore, I explore how this establishes itself in the cultural life of St Davids Cathedral assessing both the positives and negatives of the balance between boy and girl choristers.

Scholarship surrounding the cathedral chorister tradition hails Salisbury as the first cathedral to include girl choristers in 1991¹. However, there is little mention of St Davids Cathedral introducing girl treble voices into the Anglican choral tradition during the 1960s. Scholarship concerning gender and the chorister tradition written in the last decade focuses on the biological differences in vocal development between adolescent males and females and the listeners' perception of boy and girl treble voices, and so few researchers look at the repertoire itself.² Due to its location in rural West Wales and its small population, St Davids Cathedral has been lost in the narrative of the chorister tradition which includes a shift witnessed in the latter part of the twentieth century to introduce girl treble voices within the Anglican choral community.

In order to achieve my aims, I have conducted a series of interviews with individuals, including original girl choristers from the 1960s and local people who recall the occasion, to establish how Peter Boorman's decision came to be. I have studied music written by Boorman's successor Sir Nicholas Jackson during his time as musical director at St Davids Cathedral in order to assess whether as a composer, he wrote in a way that was distinctive because the treble line at St Davids Cathedral largely contained girl treble voices. I have also collected accounts from current members of St Davids Cathedral Choir and members of clergy to establish the impact of such a decision on the current chorister tradition at St Davids Cathedral. This presents the choir with a thriving girl chorister tradition on the one hand and a dwindling boy chorister tradition on the other. I have placed my conclusions drawn from personal accounts within scholarship on gender and the chorister tradition to highlight the rarity of the dynamic at St Davids Cathedral.

In the opening chapter I discuss how such poor results from boy chorister recruitment, particularly in the lead up to a BBC broadcast in April 1966, left musical director Peter Boorman with no option other than to call upon the girls' choir of Ysgol Dewi Sant, St Davids Secondary School. A secure musical foundation had already been established by head of department Rosalyn Charles and so the quality of musicianship and success of the broadcast resulted in the girls being "welcomed with open arms"³, becoming a permanent fixture. This challenges Salisbury's historic claim that they were the first UK cathedral to establish a girl chorister tradition in 1991 when in fact St Davids Cathedral began recruiting girl choristers thirty years earlier. The work of both Peter Boorman and Rosalyn Charles ensured that the choral foundation at St Davids Cathedral continued with a successful treble line.

¹ Emily Freeman, "Anglican Cathedral Choirs: The Boy Chorister Tradition and the Other Gender" (Undergrad diss., University of Winchester, March 2015), 20 ; Elizabeth Claire Stewart, "The impact of the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury and its influence on other British Anglican cathedral choirs." (PhD thesis., University of London, November 2020):15-16.

² David M. Howard, John Szymanski and Graham F. Welch, "Listeners Perception of English Cathedral Girl and Boy Choristers." *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 20, no.1 (Winter 2002): 35-49.

³ Arnold Boorman Interview - See Appendix 1 page 53.

In the second chapter I focus on Boorman's successor Sir Nicholas Jackson who was musical director at St Davids Cathedral between 1977 and 1984. It was during this time that Jackson wrote several pieces for the choir and therefore I have looked at whether Jackson's compositional style was affected by the choir's make-up. Jackson wrote in a more experimental style compared with staple pieces in the Anglican choral repertoire, as I demonstrate through specific musical examples.

In the closing chapter I examine the current choral foundation at St Davids Cathedral. St Davids continues to be in a unique position being the only UK cathedral where girl trebles are the principal treble line.⁴ The inclusion of girls' voices within the Anglican choral tradition is reflective of a societal shift that demands equality of opportunity. However, when examining both positives and negatives of the choral foundation at St Davids Cathedral, it is apparent that whilst the girls continue to thrive, the boy chorister tradition is slowly disappearing. The dependency on girl choristers at St Davids Cathedral highlights wider issues concerning boy chorister recruitment experienced by other establishments perhaps owing to the perception that singing for boys is not cool. Unpicking such gender stereotypes reveals that the Anglican choral tradition is having to adjust to an everchanging society.

⁴ Simon Pearce Interview - Appendix 1 page 74.

The introduction of girls to St Davids Cathedral Choir

Introduction

Scholarship surrounding girls' voices in the Anglican choral community tends to hail Salisbury as the first cathedral to introduce girl choristers, a move that led other cathedrals to follow suit⁵. These claims are often favoured over the fact that girls' voices have been a part of the St Davids Cathedral tradition in West Wales since their introduction in the 1960s. I explore how girl choristers came to sing at St Davids Cathedral, why the cathedral felt the need to include girl choristers and the response to this decision in the wider community. I attempt to begin to fill the gap within academic writings that discuss girl voices within the Anglican choral community. St Davids Cathedral has generally been lost in the narrative and so I aim to pay tribute to the work of the people involved in such a ground-breaking decision, acknowledging the uniqueness of musical life at St Davids in comparison to other, larger, cathedral cities. I will discuss how girl voices were introduced at St Davids Cathedral, drawing on interviews with individuals who were either directly involved in this seismic shift, or members of the community who remember the momentous occasion. I will investigate potential reasons for the difficulty in recruiting boy choristers in the St Davids area and the response to the decision to incorporate girl choristers through the examination of local media coverage and letters written to musical director Peter Boorman.

Peter Boorman's activities at St Davids Cathedral

Peter Boorman arrived at St Davids Cathedral in late 1953 with the reputation of a gifted musician following music lessons from tutors such as John Ireland. Upon arrival at St Davids, Boorman was faced with a poor parish choir who were able to sing little beyond hymn tunes.⁶ Boorman had big plans for the choral foundation at St Davids, working hard to transform the choir so that they were able to sing from notation. In the lead up to the decision to incorporate girl treble voices in the 1960s, Boorman had extreme difficulty when recruiting boy choristers. As his son Adrian Boorman explained, simply not enough boys were coming forward to sing.⁷ St Davids is situated in rural West Wales, and so Boorman did not have sufficient numbers to draw on. In St Davids, boy choristers began to decrease at an alarming rate. Boy choristers were required to commit themselves to singing several times a week, tackling complex repertoire, and therefore a lot was expected from the boys as young as age eight who were neither emotionally nor musically experienced. In the absence of a formal choir school, it became difficult for St Davids to compete with other, larger cathedral cities where boy choristers were in constant supply, placing large demands on the young choristers without the infrastructure enjoyed by larger institutions. Alongside this, agriculture played a prominent role in the lives of many families in St Davids. It was often expected that young boys work the land potato-picking for pocket money. This became a far more attractive pastime than singing in the choir. Boorman was left with a boys' choir who struggled with commitment.

⁵ Katerina West, "New People Singing Old Songs: Considering Ely Cathedral Girls' Choir through the Magnificat." (MPhil thesis., University of Cambridge, 2016): 3.

⁶ Arnold Boorman Interview - Appendix page 54; Adrian Boorman Interview - Appendix 1 page 59.

⁷ Adrian Boorman Interview - Appendix 1 page 58.



Peter Boorman with boy choristers of St Davids Cathedral May 1954.⁸

The decrease in the number of boy choristers at St Davids caught the attention of the Welsh national press. A Western Mail article dated October 6th, 1964 reads, “Choir may disband after 500 years - ‘Desperate’ shortage at St David’s”⁹ It is in this article that Boorman explains just how worrying the situation in St Davids had become, “I don’t think the situation has ever been as bad as this.. we need a miracle to save us..... We should have 10 men and 16 boys in the choir, but we only have about 7 boys and 10 men.”¹⁰ In a desperate attempt to recruit the next generation of boy choristers at St Davids, Boorman created his own marketing strategy, a poster to advertise the choir to local families.



Boorman’s recruitment poster.¹¹

⁸ Photograph held in St Davids Cathedral Library. [Accessed April 2021]

⁹ Ben Phillips, “That glorious song of old? The history of music-making of St Davids Cathedral, with specific reference and concentration on the twentieth century.” (Thesis., University of York, 2021), 69.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Held in St Davids Cathedral Library [Accessed April 2021]

The poster, parodying the old Wild West ‘Wanted Dead or Alive’ portrayals of outlaws on the run, shows Boorman’s eldest son Adrian in his surplice. Boorman painted an enticing picture of the boy chorister tradition at St Davids and even began contacting local families to see whether they had a son of an appropriate age.¹² Despite several attempts to increase the number of boy choristers at St Davids Cathedral, Boorman’s methods were proving unsuccessful, and he continued to struggle.

BBC Broadcast April 1966

The decrease in the number of boy choristers at St Davids Cathedral proved extremely problematic in the lead up to a BBC radio broadcast on Wednesday 20th April 1966 where girl treble voices were brought in to sing the treble line for St Davids Cathedral Choir. In April 1966 measles swept across the primary schools in St Davids¹³ and so several of the boy choristers, including Peter’s youngest son Arnold, were unable to sing. Adrian Boorman describes how in the rehearsals leading up to the 1966 broadcast, only two boys were in good health to sing.¹⁴ Despite help from Rosalyn Charles, head of music at Ysgol Dewi Sant; it became clear that the choir were going to struggle with only two boy choristers able to hold the treble line. By Monday, no boys were present at rehearsal which left Boorman in a nerve-racking predicament. Worried that no treble line would be prepared, Boorman shared his concerns with his eldest son Adrian and the family decided to approach the girls’ choir of Ysgol Dewi Sant, who were under the leadership of Rosalyn Charles. Boorman also had to clear this decision with the Dean and Chapter and the headmaster of Ysgol Dewi Sant which he appreciated was rather a tall order¹⁵. Despite initial trepidation, Dean Edward Jenkins and headmaster David James realised the urgency of the situation and “agreed wholeheartedly and they [the girls] were given the afternoon off school to do it.”¹⁶ Following their SOS call,¹⁷ the girls began rehearsing the required repertoire in preparation. Despite being excellent sight-readers,¹⁸ the girls had to come to grips with psalm singing which can be challenging for those who are unfamiliar with the practice. A note in Boorman’s own handwriting can be found in the Chapter Service Book at St Davids Cathedral from 1966, dated Wednesday 20th April reading, “boys did not arrive - used 6 girls from Ysgol Dewi Sant.”¹⁹ For a prestigious national occasion like a BBC radio broadcast, the boys’ choir was no longer sufficient. Using girl treble voices from Ysgol Dewi Sant, the broadcast went ahead as planned and was hugely successful.

The first instance where Boorman asked the girls to sing as part of St Davids Cathedral Choir has often been the topic of debate in smaller circles. St Davids Cathedral’s 2002 “Porth-y-Twr” exhibition claims that girls were introduced in the mid-1960s due to the boys suffering from flu.²⁰ Boorman’s obituary in *The Times* explains “in February 1963, while he was preparing for a live broadcast of choral evensong, an influenza outbreak decimated his treble line.”²¹ The BBC have no record of a broadcast of choral evensong taking place at St Davids Cathedral in February 1963. There is oral history of girls being used

¹² Organ, Organ. BBC Wales Television. 1st March 1971.

¹³ Arnold Boorman Interview - Appendix 1 page 52.

¹⁴ Adrian Boorman Interview - Appendix 1 page 57.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Rosalyn Charles Interview - Appendix 1 page 48.

¹⁸ Ibid.

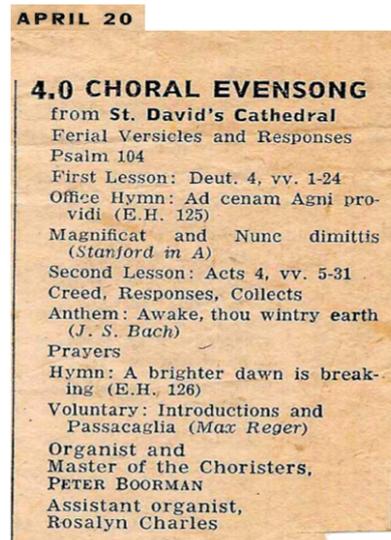
¹⁹ Register of Services from 1966 held at St Davids Cathedral Library [Accessed September 2020]

²⁰ Phillips, “That glorious song of old?” 70.

²¹ The Times Reporter, “Peter Boorman: organist and choirmaster.”, *The Times*, October 28, 2009, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/peter-boorman-organist-and-choirmaster-3kt9z077kz8>.

at St Davids as early as 1962,²² which is suggested by an article in the South Wales Evening Post written in 1966.²³ It is likely that specific dates have become garbled in communication by word of mouth over time.

The BBC Genome Project contains BBC listings information printed in the Radio Times between 1923 and 2009 which confirms that the BBC did broadcast choral evensong from St Davids Cathedral on Wednesday 20th April 1966.²⁴ Despite some confusion over the very first instance where the girls were required to sing in St Davids Cathedral Choir, the BBC broadcast of April 1966 kickstarted the girls becoming a permanent feature of St Davids Cathedral Choir.



Listing information of choral evensong at St Davids Cathedral 20th April 1966.²⁵

It is worth noting that in 1966 Rosalyn Charles was appointed as the first female assistant organist at St Davids Cathedral, something that is regularly overlooked.²⁶ This is an unusually early example of a female assistant organist employed by a cathedral in the British Isles. St Davids Cathedral pushed the boundaries within the Anglican community in so many ways and yet it is apparent that such momentous occasions have been lost within scholarly writing.

Dean Jenkins agreed to allowing the girls to sing with the choir as an isolated occasion²⁷ but after hearing the quality of the singing offered by the girls, it was decided in a Chapter meeting held on Monday 25th July 1966 that the girls were to become full choristers. “..... approval to girls in choir - separate vestry - clothing left to Dean.”²⁸ In the period that followed the BBC broadcast in April 1966, the girl choristers were accompanied by the occasional boy treble.²⁹ It could be argued that the treble line at St Davids Cathedral at this time was mixed. However, the fact remains that St Davids Cathedral were one of the first cathedrals to recruit girl choristers. The treble line continued to be predominantly female with no separate boys’ choir in operation until its re-establishment in 1991 under musical director

²² Andrea Taylor Interview - Appendix 1 page 36.

²³ “Girls may solve choir problem at cathedral.” *South Wales Evening Post - Pembrokeshire Viewpoint*, August 15, 1966 - Appendix 2 page 84/85.

²⁴ BBC Genome, Home Service Archive, Radio Times 1923-2009.

²⁵ Cutting shared by Rosalyn Charles. [Accessed April 2021]

²⁶ Christopher Taylor Interview - Appendix 1 page 47.

²⁷ Arnold Boorman Interview - Appendix 1 page 53.

²⁸ Phillips, “That glorious song of old?” 72.

²⁹ Arnold Boorman Interview - Appendix 1 page 53.

Kerry Beaumont.³⁰ With little fuss or sense of occasion, 1966 saw the girls welcomed into the treble line of St Davids Cathedral Choir.

Cymdeithas Gerdd Ysgol Dewi Sant

It is interesting to explore why Boorman felt that he was able to turn to the schoolgirls at Ysgol Dewi Sant in the absence of boy choristers. Rosalyn Charles was able to build the musicianship of the girls through the musical life of the school. Cymdeithas Gerdd Ysgol Dewi Sant (The Music Society of St Davids Secondary School) was formed in the Autumn of 1966 to increase the professionalism of music concerts for both listener and performer, “widen[ing] the scope of school concerts.”³¹ Students were given the opportunity to perform alongside professional musicians which placed Ysgol Dewi Sant alongside larger institutions who could afford to do this. As Charles explained, at Ysgol Dewi Sant, by contrast, this was done on a shoestring.³² Sir Geraint Evans, Welsh opera singer, became president of the society with eminent vice presidents including Sir Thomas Armstrong (Principal of the Royal Academy of Music) Sir Arthur Bliss (Master of the Queen’s Music) and Glyn Daniel (fellow of St John’s College Cambridge). The society presented the young girls at Ysgol Dewi Sant with a plethora of opportunities and as Charles described, she wished for the schoolgirls to perform music with original instrumentation rather than piano reductions. This allowed the girls to become familiar with a huge breadth of repertoire and as Charles explains, the girls were as a result able to perform in a selection of languages including French, Welsh, Italian and Spanish.³³ The society’s first concert at St Davids Cathedral was held in the summer of 1967 which subsequently became part of a regular concert series.

A strong link had been created between the school, cathedral and music society. The guidance from Rosalyn Charles, the school and Peter Boorman was remembered by one of the first girl choristers Jane Legget, “The combination of cathedral music and what I was getting in school was just a rare, rare opportunity. Peter and Rosalyn were absolutely central to it all.”³⁴ Boorman felt confident in his decision to ask the girls in the school choir at Ysgol Dewi Sant which can be confirmed by his son Arnold who explained, “Dad knew how good the musicianship was of the girls that he was anticipating of asking.....They were all A level students, so they were all good musicians. That’s the thing to remember about it is that they were all good musicians.”³⁵ The strong musical foundation at Ysgol Dewi Sant explains why Boorman was able to turn to the school choir for help in the broadcast in 1966.

The response in St Davids and beyond

The response in the local community to girls singing at St Davids Cathedral was generally positive because the broadcast was able to go ahead. As both Rosalyn Charles and Adrian Boorman, Peter’s eldest son expressed “necessity was the mother of invention”³⁶ and so the girls stepped in.

The men in the choir were extremely influential members of the community. Men of the choir included the local butcher, a member of the lifeboat crew and former Salisbury

³⁰ Ben Phillips, “The Introduction of Girl Choristers at St Davids Cathedral.” *Friends of Cathedral Music Magazine*, August, 2015, 3. Shared by Ben Phillips. [Accessed January 2021]

³¹ Cymdeithas Gerdd Ysgol Dewi Sant Leaflet shared by Rosalyn Charles - Appendix 3 page 86.

³² Rosalyn Charles Interview - Appendix 1 page 49.

³³ Rosalyn Charles Interview - Appendix 1 page 50.

³⁴ Jane Leggett Interview - Appendix 1 page 31.

³⁵ Arnold Boorman Interview Appendix 1 page 52.

³⁶ Rosalyn Charles Interview - Appendix 1 page 50; Adrian Boorman Interview Appendix 1 page 59.

chorister Major Bernard Howells. These men created an informal PR campaign through conversations with local individuals and as Adrian Boorman explains, the men were delighted that the girls were able to save the treble line and allow the choir to continue to sing.³⁷ Dean Jenkins sang in the choir as well as being the Dean of St Davids, and several minor canons who visited the cathedral would also sing. The positive response presented by the cathedral filtered into the local community and the girls “were welcomed with open arms.”³⁸

Local newspapers expressed how radical this change was. The South Wales Evening post dated Monday 15th August 1966 printed the heading “Girls may solve choir problem at cathedral” followed by, “girls in a cathedral choir! The purists will undoubtedly shudder at the prospect.”³⁹ This would suggest some initial disagreement; however, the girl choristers remained unaware of any potential negativity. According to Leggett “I definitely felt that we were accepted in every sense, I really do.”⁴⁰

It is interesting to try and deduce why the girls “were welcomed with open arms”.⁴¹ Until the later twentieth century, the Anglican choral tradition was deeply rooted in its exclusively male tradition. Welch and Howard claim that there was a “concern that the ‘social justice’ underpinning the entry of female choristers might be in conflict with a musical tradition in cathedrals that has apparently celebrated the uniqueness of the male chorister voice for over 1500 years.”⁴² When Salisbury Cathedral introduced a girls’ choir in 1991, this decision was described as hugely controversial and caused “bitter dismay in the hearts of many for whom the all-male choir was a unique treasure.”⁴³ However, in 1966 it is apparent that the decision in St Davids was not met with the same level of controversy. As Leggett explained, a small tight-knit community like St Davids was perhaps better able to be pragmatic and accepting of the potential contribution of talented young musicians regardless of their sex. The girls at St Davids were required when the treble line at the cathedral was at risk of perishing and so social norms became flexible because girls’ voices were essential.

Peter’s youngest son Arnold describes with animation how much he admired the girls in the choir when singing as a boy chorister.⁴⁴ Despite an intimidating age gap Arnold describes, “Learning from the girls was fantastic, singing with the girls was fantastic, it gave me a lot of confidence later on in life.”⁴⁵ Unlike the girl choristers Arnold wore a traditional gown and surplice, like the gentlemen of the choir. Academic robes were ordered for the girls to wear, although, they were not to wear surplices.⁴⁶ Both Leggett and one of the first girl chorister probationers at St Davids Cathedral, Pat Ginty, recall how dress code for the girls could at times be problematic.⁴⁷ The gowns were designed with a V-shaped neckline and so what was worn underneath became extremely important. Although the girls were accepted and valued, they weren’t on equal footing in terms of the foundation.

Although service attire indicated that choristers at St Davids Cathedral were far from traditional, the girls created quite a reaction in the wider Anglican choral community due to

³⁷ Adrian Boorman Interview - Appendix 1 page 58.

³⁸ Arnold Boorman Interview - Appendix 1 page 53.

³⁹ “Girls may solve choir problem at cathedral.” *South Wales Evening Post - Pembrokeshire Viewpoint*, August 15, 1966 - Appendix 2 page 84/85.

⁴⁰ Jane Leggett Interview - Appendix 1 page 31.

⁴¹ Arnold Boorman Interview - Appendix 1 page 53.

⁴² David M. Howard, and Graham F. Welch, “Gendered Voice in the Cathedral Choir.” *Psychology of Music* 30, no.1 (2002):102.

⁴³ Alan Mould, *The English Chorister: A History* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), 268.

⁴⁴ Arnold Boorman Interview - Appendix 1 page 54.

⁴⁵ Ibid - Appendix 1 page 55.

⁴⁶ Adrian Boorman Interview - Appendix 1 page 57.

⁴⁷ Jane Leggett Interview - Appendix 1 page 32; Pat Ginty Interview - Appendix 1 page 39.

the quality of sound they were producing. In a letter to The Times dated July 24th, 1993, Boorman recalls receiving a letter following the broadcast in 1966. “After the transmission a card arrived from Sir Percy Hull, Organist Emeritus of Hereford, praising the tone of our *boys*. He was old, experienced and distinguished, and I fell into none of these categories, so I did not enlighten him. There was no secret, merely the careful choice of high-calibre, musical girls of early secondary school age.”⁴⁸ Leggett describes a vivid memory from her time as a chorister in the 1960s where Boorman read the girls a letter from the choristers at St Pauls Cathedral following a recorded Eucharist. The choristers of St Pauls wished to congratulate Boorman on the sound of his *boys*⁴⁹. As Leggett recalls, the girls were encouraged to sound like boys and felt triumphant when doing so.⁵⁰ Adrian Boorman further explains that this was one of the conditions of the girls being in the choir.⁵¹ The Dean and Chapter felt it necessary for the choir to continue to sound “traditional”. Vibrato became the sign of a mature soprano voice and so it was strictly forbidden in the Anglican treble tradition. The girls were trained and encouraged to maintain a traditional cathedral tone, and the correspondence received by Boorman indicates that the girls’ voices were indistinguishable from those of boys.

Conclusion

It is evident that Peter Boorman’s decision to incorporate girl treble voices at St Davids Cathedral ensured that its choral tradition was able to be maintained, one which continues to be strong to the present day. Despite Salisbury being the first in the Church of England to include girl choristers, St Davids Cathedral was ahead of its time, being the first in the Church in Wales to recruit girl choristers thirty years earlier. The location of St Davids on the rural West coast of Wales not only caused huge difficulty for Boorman at the time to sustain the boy chorister tradition, but may also explain why such a momentous occasion, a seismic shift in the Anglican choral community, has been lost in the narrative since. Both Peter Boorman and Rosalyn Charles were pioneers in creating a strong musical foundation at St Davids Cathedral with its links to Ysgol Dewi Sant and should be a cause for celebration.

⁴⁸ Phillips, “That glorious song of old?” 72.

⁴⁹ Jane Leggett Interview - Appendix 1 page 33.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Adrian Boorman Interview - Appendix 1 page 58.

Writing for girls' voices at St Davids: Sir Nicholas Jackson

Introduction

In this chapter I intend to explore whether composers write differently for girl treble voices in comparison to standard pieces in the Anglican choral repertoire which were likely written with boy treble voices in mind. I will specifically investigate whether composer Sir Nicholas Jackson, who worked closely with girl treble voices at St Davids Cathedral, composed differently through comparing his compositions with works by established choral composers.

Within scholarship, attempts have been made to distinguish the inherent differences between boy and girl treble voices and how these develop differently with age.⁵² Sources focusing on the listener's perception of an adolescent voice have created case studies using well known pieces of choral repertoire, however these are used with the intention of discovering biological differences which may affect one's ability to train a specific voice.⁵³ There has been minimal analysis specifically of choral repertoire tailored to girl cathedral trebles because they have become part of the culture in recent years. Relatively little music has been written for them which has resulted in little scholarly investigation.

Sir Nicholas Jackson was Boorman's successor and held the position of musical director at St Davids Cathedral between 1977 and 1984. The choir at this time largely included girl treble voices. In 1979 there were three boy choristers and ten girl choristers⁵⁴ and in 1981 there were two boy choristers and eleven girl choristers.⁵⁵ Scholarship surrounding Sir Nicholas Jackson centres around his achievements as composer and organist with no reference of his compositions for St Davids Cathedral Choir. Through analysing Jackson's 1983 *Te Deum* and 1977 *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* in the Lydian mode⁵⁶ I aim to establish whether Jackson wrote for girl treble voices in a distinctive way. I will look specifically at Jackson's part writing, how the girl trebles are able to get their entries, the relationship between choir and organ and the singability of the music. This is to challenge previous arguments suggesting that boy choristers are the ideal in terms of "authenticity of performance."⁵⁷, to which girl trebles are unable to compete.

Comparative Analysis of Musical Characteristics

1983 saw Jackson compose a *Te Deum* for St Davids Cathedral Choir to be performed at the St Davids Music Festival of the same year. Its lively opening instantly reminds me of Benjamin Britten's 1934 *Jubilate Deo* in C major which is a staple feature of a Sunday morning matins service. The opening of both Britten's *Jubilate* and Jackson's *Te Deum* include the choir in unison with offbeat, dotted rhythms accompanied by scalic organ accompaniment. Following this unison passage, Jackson imitates the voices splitting trebles and tenors against the altos and basses which is similarly seen in the opening of Britten's *Jubilate*.

⁵² Howard, and Welch, "Gendered Voice in the Cathedral Choir," 102-120.

⁵³ Howard, Szymanski, and Welch, "Listeners' Perception," 35-49.

⁵⁴ St Davids Cathedral Festival Programme 1979 held in St Davids Cathedral Library. [Accessed April 2021]

⁵⁵ St Davids Cathedral Festival Programme 1981 held in St Davids Cathedral Library. [Accessed April 2021]

⁵⁶ Editions shared by Sir Nicholas Jackson. [Accessed October 2020]

⁵⁷ Stewart, "The impact of the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury," 55.

Te Deum
Revised Edition 2003
NICHOLAS JACKSON

Off-beat dotted rhythms

Alia marcia = 100

Soprano: *f* We praise... Thee, O God: we ack now ledge Thee to be the Lord.

Alto: *f* We praise... Thee, O God: we ack now ledge Thee to be the Lord.

Tenor: *f* We praise... Thee, O God: we ack now ledge Thee to be the Lord.

Bass: *f* We praise... Thee, O God: we ack now ledge Thee to be the Lord.

Organ: *mf* Sw + Gi 8', 4', 2'

Unison writing

Alia marcia

Scallic organ accompaniment

All the earth doth wor ship Thee the Fath er ev er last ing.

To Thee all Angels cry aloud, the Heav'ns and all the Powers there

All the earth doth wor ship Thee the Fath er ev er last ing.

To Thee all Angels cry aloud, the Heav'ns and all the

Nicholas Jackson *Te Deum*

*Written for St. George's Chapel, Windsor,
at the request of H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh*

JUBILATE DEO

For Mixed Choir (SATB) and Organ

Benjamin Britten,
edited by David Willcocks

Off-beat dotted rhythms

Unison writing

Lively

Soprano: *f* O be joy - ful

Alto: *f* O be joy - ful

Tenor: *f* O be joy - ful

Bass: *f* O be joy - ful

Organ: *f*

Scallic organ accompaniment

Lively

in the Lord, all ye lands: Serve the Lord

in the Lord, all ye lands: Serve the Lord

in the Lord, all ye lands: Serve the Lord

Benjamin Britten *Jubilate Deo*

Bar 24 of Jackson's *Te Deum* includes unison treble writing which can be seen in several choral works. Charles Stanford's *Magnificat in B flat* contains trebles only on 'And his mercy is on them that fear him, throughout all generations' before handing over to the tenors and basses with 'He hath showed strength with his arm, he hath scattered the proud'. A similar dependency on trebles and lower voices can be seen in the section beginning at bar 24 of Jackson's *Te Deum*. This is not an uncommon decision amongst choral composers. In Herbert Howells' 'Like as the Hart' the main theme centres around trebles and tenors.

Unison treble writing

Nicholas Jackson *Te Deum*

Unison treble writing

Charles Stanford *Magnificat in B flat*

Main theme exchanged between trebles and men

51 SOP. *mf*
S. My tears have
A.
T. meat day and night.
B. meat day and night.
Org.

55
S. been my meat day and night, my meat
A.
T. TEN. My tears day and
B. *mf* My tears have been my
Org. *mp*
senza Ped

Herbert Howells *Like as the Hart*

Bar 42 of Jackson's Te Deum begins to broaden in note values creating an allargando and more relaxed feeling before a treble solo. A similar moment can be seen in Britten's 1961 Te Deum in C major which often accompanies Britten's Jubilate in a service. In the example of Britten, the voices broaden and relax before the treble solo entry on 'Thou art the king of glory oh Christ'. A similar compositional decision is made by Jackson in bar 45 where voices broaden on an A major 7 chord before resolving to an A major chord, leading into a treble solo on 'Thou art the king of glory oh Christ'. The solo itself is particularly interesting in Jackson's work with heavy reliance on triplet rhythms and the inclusion of accidentals. There are no obvious parallels between this and other treble solos in the choral repertoire, perhaps suggesting that this is a moment where Jackson's own compositional voice was to the fore.

Broadening of note values

17

18

Benjamin Britten *Te Deum* - Treble Solo

Broadening of note values

Copyright Nichols Jackson 2008

A major 7 - A major

Nicholas Jackson *Te Deum* - Treble Solo

Jackson's reliance on treble voices can be seen in earlier works composed during his time at St Davids Cathedral. His Magnificat and Nunc Dimitus for treble voices only in the Lydian mode composed in 1977 is a suitable example. Both the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis frequently alternate between different time signatures. These include, 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 3/8 and 5/8 which for young musicians is complex. As well as this, Jackson uses tricky rhythmic values, alternating between semiquaver runs, longer note values, triplet vs straight quavers and a sextuplet. When singing through the piece concentration is required to navigate such technical rhythmic writing with little moments of pause. The music of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis emphasise the upper register of the treble vocal range and so the pieces require secure breathing and sound choral technique.

Several changes in time signature

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The first system (measures 40-43) shows time signatures of 4/4, 3/4, 3/4, and 4/4. The second system (measures 44-47) shows 4/4, 2/4, 4/4, 3/4, and 3/4. The third system (measures 48-51) shows 5/8, 3/4, 2/4, and 2/4. The lyrics are: "seen Thy sal vat ion which Thou hast prepared be fore the face of all peo ple... To be a light to light on the gen tiles, and to be the glory of Thy peo ple Is rael... Glor y be to the Fath er and to the Son and to the Ho ly Ghost As it was in the be gin ning is now and ev er shall be". The score includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *tutti*, and *mf*, and features various rhythmic patterns including triplets and sextuplets.

Nicholas Jackson *Nunc Dimittis in the Lydian Mode*

8
bless ed_ for he that is mighty hath magnif ied me and Holy is his name And his mer cy is on them that

13 **Complex rhythmic writing**
fear him through out all gen er at ions_ He hath shew ed strenght with his arm he hath

16
scatt ered the proud in j the im ag in at ion of their hearts. He hath put down the might y from their seat and hath ex

Nicholas Jackson *Magnificat in the Lydian Mode*

The differences between Jackson's writing here and that seen in his Te Deum is that the organ supports the treble voices throughout. In bar 4 of the Magnificat the trebles are required to jump a fourth; however, the organ also does this and so at any moments of unease the trebles are able to listen to the organ. Unlike the Te Deum, Jackson is giving the trebles all the help they need.

4
he hath re gar ded the low li ness of his hand

Nicholas Jackson *Magnificat in the Lydian Mode*

With the tempo marked as *rubato* and *piu lento* both the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis are in unison and so as a musical director, Jackson would have only taught the choristers one line. Jackson has created a contrast in his Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis of extremely complex rhythmic writing on the one hand and a treble line that is singable on the other. The 1970s saw a concerted effort to bring modernist music to the masses. Composers

such as Britten and his 1958 *Noye's Fludde* and Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's 1960 *O Magnum Mysterium*, are examples of high modernist works aimed at school children which became increasingly popular in the 70s and 80s. Composers were creating conceptually difficult music but making it possible for children to sing. Through the example of his 1977 *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* I believe Jackson's music can be seen to be part of that culture.

Jackson's tendency to write complex music can once again be seen when returning to his *Te Deum* at bar 55. This section uses lots of imitation between voice parts beginning with the treble line. Imitation is not uncommon within choral repertoire, particularly in the Renaissance period with works by composers such as Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Tomás Luis de Victoria. William Byrd's 1592 *Four-Part Mass* is built on imitation of voice parts and in the *Kyrie*, it begins between the upper voices. The several instances of imitation used by Byrd are close enough to follow in other voice parts, but with Jackson by contrast, the imitation is more difficult to follow. Any pitch support given to the trebles by the organ in preparation for the phrases is obscured amongst diminished chords.

Kyrie eleison William Byrd (c.1540-1623)

William Byrd Mass for Four Voices - Kyrie

Copyright Nichols Jackson 2008

Nicholas Jackson Te Deum

A common feature of decoration in several choral works is splitting the treble voices into two parts which can be seen in bar 67 of Jackson's *Te Deum*. This adds textual interest in the treble line and the Anglican choral repertoire is full of examples such as Stanford's *Magnificat* in A major where trebles divide on 'he hath sent empty away'. The intervals chosen by Jackson in bars 67 and 68 are difficult to navigate with the use of minor thirds and fourths. This is another example within Jackson's music that demonstrates that he felt able to challenge the treble voices that he was working with.

Treble writing in two parts

The image displays a musical score for the *Te Deum* by Nicholas Jackson. It features three systems of music. The first system, starting at bar 67, shows the vocal parts and organ accompaniment. The vocal parts are split into two treble staves, with the lyrics: "We there fore pray thee, help thy ser vants whom thou hast re deem ed with Thy pre cious Judge. We there fore pray Thee, help Thy ser vants whom Thou Thy We there fore pray Thee help Thy ser vants whom thou hast re deem ed with Thy re cious We there fore pray Thee help Thy ser". The organ part includes markings for "Gt + Sw reeds" and "ff". The second system, starting at bar 72, continues the vocal parts with lyrics: "blood pre cious blood blood vants." and the organ part with markings for "Less Sw reeds", "mf Sw", and "Man.". The third system shows the organ part with markings for "+16' reed" and "Man.". The copyright notice "Copyright Nichols Jackson 2008" is located at the bottom left of the score.

Nicholas Jackson *Te Deum*

Treble writing in two parts

Charles Stanford *Magnificat in A major*

Jackson's *Te Deum* is a difficult piece to sing. It sits beautifully in the voice, but some passages prove tricky such as the opening in bar 3 on 'we acknowledge thee to be the Lord'. We begin with the inclusion of C#'s and then as we descend from D to B, we see the inclusion of A#'s and G#'s. Similar difficulty can be seen in bar 18 in the phrase 'Heav'n and earth are full of the Majesty of Thy glory'. Beginning with a semitone F to F# the phrase then ascends with the inclusion of Eb's before moving between Eb, F# and E natural on the text 'Thy glory'. The treble line is often chromatic in Jackson's work with several accidentals to indicate a shift in harmony, with little support given from the organ or other voice parts.

Nicholas Jackson *Te Deum*

2

14

F natural - F#

Ho ly: Lord God of Sa ba oth; Heav'n and earth are

Ho ly: Lord God of Sa ba oth; Heav'n and earth are

Ho ly: Lord God of sa ba oth; heav'n and earth are

19

Eb F# E natural

poco piu mosso

full of the Maj es ty of Thy glo ry.

full of the Maj es ty of Thy glo ry.

full of the Maj est ty of Thy glo ry.

poco piu mosso

mf

Nicholas Jackson *Te Deum*

Conclusion

From the moment of arrival at St Davids Cathedral Sir Nicholas Jackson took advantage of the girl treble line that Boorman had established and experimented with music that would seem complex to any musician. It is clear in the example of Jackson's work that a composer working with girl trebles used several techniques that can be seen in staple pieces of Anglican choral repertoire written for boy treble voices. Jackson's work is a particularly poignant example because whilst composing, he may have been finding his way between high modernism and singability. This is seen through the complexity of his work but also the continuation of compositional styles witnessed in other choral works. Composers such as Jackson were able to experiment with more complex material likely because musical directors can train girl treble voices for a longer period of time. Girl choristers at St Davids sing until the age of eighteen. Boy choristers sing for a smaller window of time depending upon when their voice breaks. Jackson would have had three to four extra years with the girl choristers in comparison to boys resulting in a much-enhanced musical training.

Balancing boy and girl trebles at St Davids Cathedral

Introduction

The uniqueness of musical life at St Davids Cathedral continues in the present day with a principal treble line that is entirely female. The dependence on girl choristers is unlike any other UK Cathedral.⁵⁸ I aim to explore what culture this dependency creates at St Davids through assessing both the positive and negatives of the balance between boy and girl choristers. I will achieve this using the testimony of current choir members and clergy at St Davids Cathedral to identify both opportunities and limitations faced by the choral foundation. Subsequently, I will place my findings within scholarship surrounding gender and the chorister tradition which will help unpick some of the difficulties concerning chorister recruitment which continues to be problematic in many cathedrals. Within the last decade, research has been conducted using case studies of English Cathedrals to discuss how the structure of a choral foundation relates to gender and the chorister tradition.⁵⁹ Several English Cathedrals used in these case studies are dependent upon choir schools for recruitment and so my chapter aims to analyse a Welsh Cathedral which is dependent upon local families, to assess how this impacts the balance between boy and girl choristers.

St Davids Cathedral Choral Foundation

The presence of the choir enhances daily worship at St Davids Cathedral notably because of its ability to encourage others to share in worship.⁶⁰ Something that is often overlooked when discussing the choral foundation at St Davids is that “there isn’t a girls’ choir. There’s a cathedral choir whose treble line is, uniquely, female.”⁶¹ Before the COVID-19 pandemic the girl choristers of St Davids Cathedral Choir would sing a treble only service on a Wednesday evening, a service with the Lay Clerks and Choral Scholars on a Thursday evening and two services of matins, eucharist, or evensong on a Sunday. St Davids Cathedral Boys’ Choir sings services only on Tuesday evening and also Friday evening with the Lay Clerks and Choral Scholars. A larger number of services means the girls are given more rehearsal time and therefore a key difference between boy and girl choristers at St Davids is the output of repertoire. “The boys’ choir don’t sing as often as the girls, so the repertoire is smaller and different.”⁶² Musical directors are able to work with the girl choristers of St Davids Cathedral until the age of eighteen and, therefore achieve much more highly trained and developed voices. The duration of a boy chorister’s time at St Davids Cathedral is dependent upon when their voice breaks which in recent years has occurred at a younger age.⁶³ The boys’ choir at St Davids Cathedral is therefore not as technically skilled as the girls’ and so it is more difficult to keep it populated.

⁵⁸ Simon Pearce Interview - Appendix 1 page 74.

⁵⁹ Amanda Mackey, “New Voice: The Patterns and Provisions for Girl Choristers in the English Cathedral Choirs.” (Undergrad diss, Bangor University, May 2015); Evangelos Himondies, David M. Howard, Matthew Owens and Graham F. Welch, “The Developing Female Chorister Voice: Case Study Evidence of Musical Development” *J Voice* 33, no.4 (July 2019): 516-525; and Katrina West, “New People Singing Old Songs: Considering Ely Cathedral Girls’ Choir through the Magnificat.” (MPhil thesis, University of Cambridge, 2016)

⁶⁰ Dean Sarah Rowland Jones Interview - Appendix 1 page 64.

⁶¹ Jenny Kitchell Interview - Appendix 1 page 76.

⁶² Oliver Waterer Interview - Appendix 1 page 65.

⁶³ Mark Prigg, “Could the choir boy disappear? Scientists find boys voices are breaking earlier than ever due to ‘rich diet’” *The Daily Mail*, January 11, 2013, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2260804/Are-days-choirboy-numbered-Scientists-boys-voices-breaking-earlier-rich-diet.html>.

What are the positives?

The increasing decline of boy choristers in cathedrals has led several to make the decision to include girl choristers in their worship through the introduction of a secondary choir or by ensuring that boy and girl choristers are on equal terms. Yet, several establishments including St George Chapel Windsor, St Paul's, and Westminster Cathedral to name only a few, continue to reject the inclusion of girls' voices. These establishments are examples of peculiars, churches that are subject to jurisdiction of the monarch or an archbishop rather than jurisdiction of the diocese.⁶⁴ These establishments continue to preserve this museum culture which does not truly reflect the ever-changing parameters of society.⁶⁵ They are maintaining the single sex cathedral choir tradition, while there are few other single sex activities for children in twenty-first century Britain. The inclusion of both sexes during cathedral worship at St Davids means members of the community continue to feel represented. This can also be seen through current members of clergy at St Davids with the introduction of Bishop Joanna Penberthy in 2016 and the Dean of St Davids, Dr Sarah Rowland Jones in 2018.

The contrast between elite establishments and rural cathedrals such as St Davids, is recognised by Martin Ashley in *How High Should Boys Sing?* when he predicts, "One thing that I can foresee is a split between the big, prestigious cathedrals such as Canterbury, St Paul's or Winchester and the less well-known provincial ones. In this split it is only the former that continue to maintain traditional boys' choirs whilst the latter reluctantly face up to the need to amalgamate boys and girls, either for financial reasons or because the fight to recruit good boy choristers from a scarce pool when so many able and enthusiastic girls present themselves is lost."⁶⁶ This prediction is entirely correct when examining the difference between St Davids Cathedral and other establishments. The choral foundation at St Davids is shaped in such a way due to a small population and the absence of a choir school and so it recruits from a base of all young people with an interest in music, irrespective of gender. Moreover, St Davids Cathedral can be seen to be ahead of the wider culture in this, as this inclusivity was instigated from the moment of the girls' arrival in 1966.

The strength of musicianship proved instrumental to the establishment of a girl chorister tradition back in the 1960s and can continue to be seen in the most recent generation of girl choristers at St Davids Cathedral. Members of choir and music staff alike felt that the girls perform their role with professionalism and focus, "I have generally found that the boys are much more enthusiastic and oblivious to the challenges of singing high music or long notes, whereas with the girls, it is a much more serious affair."⁶⁷ A key difference between boy and girl choristers at St Davids is the number of services and this is reflected through the behaviour in a rehearsal environment with the difference being described as, "the choir room with the boys is fizzing with energetic, younger energy."⁶⁸ and "I've always found the girls more work like in a rehearsal and very kind of focused and attentive....The boys seem to find that niche a little bit more naturally. They're just a bit more outgoing in a sense."⁶⁹ These comments fuel the idea that girl choristers at St Davids Cathedral are able to achieve a higher level of training providing consistency within the choral foundation. Ashley attempts to distinguish a difference in behaviour between boy and girl choristers deducing that, "At a

⁶⁴ Barber, P. "What is a Peculiar?" *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, 3, no.16, (1995): 299.

⁶⁵ Sarah McDonald Interview - Appendix 1 page 61/62.

⁶⁶ Martin Ashley, *How High Should Boys Sing?: Gender, Authenticity and Credibility in the Young Male Voice*. (New York: Routledge, 2016): 170.

⁶⁷ Luke Phillips Interview - Appendix 1 page 78.

⁶⁸ Tim Kitchell Interview - Appendix 1 page 77.

⁶⁹ Simon Pearce Interview - Appendix 1 page 70.

practical level, there is little doubt that the majority of boys need a sense of male solidarity if they are to overcome their fears and inhibitions about singing.”⁷⁰ Boy choristers rely on the encouragement and enthusiasm of one another in order to fulfil their role which perhaps explains why boys at St Davids are viewed as more “outgoing” or “energetic” whereas “girls tend to be quicker to want to please adults.”⁷¹ It is the consistent professionalism shown by the girls that has allowed the chorister tradition at St Davids Cathedral to continue, resulting in musical directors inheriting a strong treble line under the title of St Davids Cathedral Choir.

The strength of the girl chorister tradition at St Davids is something that has appeared constant over generations. This is something that is recognisable about St Davids Cathedral and is evident in the testament of Tenor Lay Clerk Chris Limbert who says, “I think the most unique thing about the culture here is that the cathedral choir is drawn from locals and so there is a rich heritage of choristers across several generations within families. Often at cathedrals with boarding choristers they are not local to their cathedral. This means that they often don’t stay within the community in the future. This is why St Davids is unique.”⁷² As this illustrates, St Davids Cathedral has a parish as well as cathedral role. Local families feed into the chorister tradition and this is ultimately what keeps it alive. It is easy to assume that St Davids Cathedral is at a great disadvantage due to its geography, small population size and the absence of a choir school. However, the small pool from which it is possible to recruit choristers in St Davids has resulted in the chorister tradition being entirely a local undertaking, rooted within its community.

What is lost?

The girl treble line of St Davids Cathedral Choir has many advantages, but the converse is also true: the boy chorister tradition at St Davids has faded. St Davids Cathedral has struggled to maintain a consistent boy chorister tradition and the recruitment of boy choristers continues to be a problem. One of the key reasons behind the introduction of girl choristers in 1966 was because there were insufficient committed boy choristers, and it seems this lack of consistency is all too familiar. In the lead up to Kerry Beaumont re-establishing the boys’ choir in 1991,⁷³ the number of boy choristers in St Davids Cathedral Choir was prone to fluctuate. Under the directorship of Malcolm Watts, the choir in 1986 saw eight boy choristers and ten girl choristers.⁷⁴ In 1988 there were four boys and twelve girls⁷⁵ and in 1990 there were only two boys and fourteen girls.⁷⁶ When Beaumont arrived in 1991 the Festival Programme fails to include an image of the boys’ choir most likely because there wasn’t one available to include. Despite what looked like another dire period for boy chorister recruitment, Beaumont made the decision to split the boys and girls into two separate choirs. Beaumont knew the strength of the girls who fell under the title of St Davids Cathedral Choir and that work had to be done to recruit boy choristers. Under the directorship of Alex Mason, 2011 saw the boys’ choir heyday⁷⁷ with fifteen boy choristers⁷⁸ and some travelling as far as 30 miles to sing.⁷⁹ Musical directors adopt different approaches

⁷⁰ Ashley, *How High Should Boys Sing?*, 98.

⁷¹ Sarah MacDonald Interview - Appendix 1 page 60.

⁷² Chris Limbert Interview - Appendix 1 page 83.

⁷³ Phillips, “Introduction of Girl Choristers,” 3.

⁷⁴ St Davids Cathedral Festival Programme 1986 held in St Davids Cathedral Library [Accessed April 2021]

⁷⁵ St Davids Cathedral Festival Programme 1988 held in St Davids Cathedral Library [Accessed April 2021]

⁷⁶ St Davids Cathedral Festival Programme 1990 held in St Davids Cathedral Library [Accessed April 2021]

⁷⁷ Simon Pearce Interview - Appendix 1 page 68.

⁷⁸ St Davids Cathedral Music Festival Programme 2011 shared by Simon Pearce [Accessed April 2021]

⁷⁹ Simon Pearce Interview - Appendix 1 page 68.

to the boys' choir at St Davids which is summarised by organist Simon Pearce who says, "Whoever has come here has always had a sense of the importance that the girls are the cathedral choir and not the boys. It is sad, but no one has ever tipped the balance the other way."⁸⁰ Despite the thriving girl chorister tradition at St Davids Cathedral, a sustained energy across multiple directors might be needed to reinvigorate the boy chorister tradition.

An interesting observation made by several Lay Clerks of St Davids Cathedral Choir which may shed light on the reasoning behind the decline of boy choristers is that society has presented choral singing generally as a feminine pastime. "I feel like there has been a problem with the social perception of singing choral music for boys. I know that it was certainly considered "uncool" by most of my peers growing up, in fact classical music in general was to some extent, but singing as a treble, or "like a girl" as it was usually described if making fun of it, particularly so."⁸¹ "It is vitally important to ensure that the tradition of having a boys' choir is kept. Personally, I feel it helps eliminate the stigma that singing is only for girls."⁸² "As someone who stuck through being told singing in a choir wasn't cool for many years, I can understand why many boys are reluctant to join."⁸³

It is clear that a stigma has presented itself whereby boy trebles are perceived as feminine and so it is important to examine the stereotypes associated with the performance of gender which may explain why this is the case. Gender is often referred to as a performed identity through the repetition of acts.⁸⁴ The performance of gender norms associated with masculinity and femininity are societal constructs and these have been malleable over time. This is something that is considered by Ashley who marks the *End of the Golden Century* for boy trebles during the 1960s with the introduction of rock and roll music presenting a new definition of masculinity, "This market did not, by and large, include younger boys with high voices who lacked the magnetic sex appeal and aggressively masculine voices of this newly extended period of 'boyhood'."⁸⁵ In his work, Ashley explores the idea that the performance of masculinity within the cathedral music context (often viewed as 'soft' masculinity) is different to the masculinity witnessed outside of that environment ('hard' masculinity). "Boys can perform one kind of music and appreciate, socialize or define cultural identity through others."⁸⁶ Despite the overwhelming influence of popular culture, within a cathedral context, boy trebles continue to be considered invaluable culturally and musically. At the turn of the twenty-first century however, the Anglican choral tradition witnessed drastic changes as wider Western society no longer accepts the exclusion of girls. This is hugely encouraging; however, the introduction of girls has caused changes in the perception of performance previously considered norm amongst the boy chorister tradition, by associating a high adolescent voice with femininity. Boys can confidently perform masculinity in an all-male setting but when they are exposed in a mixed sex environment, boys then become uncertain of this performance and are often ridiculed for "sounding like a girl."⁸⁷ Therefore, masculinity and a sense of identity for adolescent males is perhaps a fragile concept showing that the introduction of girl choristers is not only representative of changes within the Anglican choral tradition, but also within the wider society.

⁸⁰ Simon Pearce Interview - Appendix 1 page 69.

⁸¹ Lawrence Pethick Interview - Appendix 1 page 80.

⁸² Luke Phillips Interview - Appendix 1 page 78.

⁸³ Chris Lambert Interview - Appendix 1 page 82/83.

⁸⁴ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and the Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40, no.4 (1988): 519.

⁸⁵ Ashley, *How High Should Boys Sing?*, 34.

⁸⁶ Martin Ashley, "You sing like a girl! An exploration of 'boyiness' through the treble voice." *Sex Education* 6, no.2 (May 2006): 200.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

Through examining the current choral tradition at St Davids Cathedral, it is extremely difficult to draw a neat conclusion. What the girl choristers achieve at St Davids Cathedral has resulted in the reputation of capable and focused musicians, but this has been at the cost of a consistent boy chorister tradition. Girls can sing until the age of eighteen at St Davids and with maturity comes commitment to singing. The strength of the girl chorister tradition presents St Davids Cathedral with a unique culture that is representative of the tight-knit community in which the cathedral is situated. As society now insists on equality of opportunity, it is pleasing to think that choral foundations strive for parity between boy and girl choristers. Bristol Cathedral alternates between boy and girl choristers on a weekly basis and so there is equal opportunity for both to sing. By contrast, St Davids Cathedral is simply a “victim of circumstance”⁸⁸ and does not have the population or momentum to make that happen at present. It must be emphasised that a balance is not easy to achieve at St Davids given its rural location and the quality of musicianship and professionalism of the girl choristers.

⁸⁸ Simon Pearce Interview - Appendix 1 page 74.

Conclusion

The decision made by Peter Boorman and others to introduce girl choristers at St Davids Cathedral in April 1966 ensured the choral foundation was able to continue amidst challenging times. Boorman faced great difficulty in recruiting boy choristers due to the geography and demographics of St Davids. St Davids Cathedral's location in rural West Wales may also explain why such a momentous occasion has been lost in the narrative within the Anglican choral community.

Through inheriting Boorman's established girl treble line, Sir Nicholas Jackson was able to experiment with complex choral writing within his compositions during his time at St Davids Cathedral. Through comparing Jackson's work with established pieces of the Anglican choral repertoire I have shown that this did influence the music that Jackson was composing. He was able to write in a way that was more challenging. Jackson was likely able to do this because girl choristers sing until the age of eighteen at St Davids and therefore receive a higher level of training.

Today, the choral foundation at St Davids Cathedral has a unique culture. The strength of the girl chorister tradition is reflective of the tight knit community in which St Davids Cathedral is situated and at the same time, boy chorister recruitment continues to be problematic. The fading of the boy chorister tradition is representative of a societal shift where singing for adolescent boys is increasingly being viewed as uncool. Equality between boy and girl choristers at St Davids is difficult to achieve due to the dependency upon the girl choristers which has been the norm for almost sixty years.

This dissertation has provided evidence towards the fragility of the cathedral chorister tradition. It is a practice that has existed for hundreds of years, surviving the Reformation⁸⁹, and has largely been an all-male tradition that has depended upon man and boy for its continuation.⁹⁰ Since the last decade of the twentieth century however, the cathedral chorister tradition has witnessed several changes due to the decline in boy choristers. The study of St Davids Cathedral demonstrates that it takes talented and charismatic individuals to keep that tradition alive, when presented with difficulties.

Space did not permit wider exploration here, but this study has opened up crucial research questions for further study. There is further close investigation to be undertaken of the shifts in cathedral culture under individual musical directors. There may also be fruitful comparisons to make between St Davids Cathedral and of other provincial cathedrals in small urban conurbations, such as Ripon, Rochester, or Carlisle, to explore the extent to which parallels may be drawn between cathedrals in similar social environments.

This dissertation pays tribute to the legacy of the decision made by Peter Boorman, and others in 1966 to recruit girl choristers which has ensured that the choral foundation at St Davids Cathedral has survived several decades and continues to thrive in the present day.

⁸⁹ Freeman, "Anglican Cathedral Choirs," 14.

⁹⁰ Stewart, "The impact of the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury," 3.

Bibliography

- . Ashley, Martin. "You sing like a girl? An exploration of 'boyiness' through the treble voice." *Sex Education* 6, no.2 (May 2006): 193-205.
- . Ashley, Martin. *How High Should Boys Sing?: Gender, Authenticity and Credibility in the Young Male Voice*. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- . Atkins, Anne. "Give us a G! Give girl choristers equal rights now." *The Times*, December 15 2012. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/give-us-a-g-give-girl-choristers-equal-rights-now-thsfmqx8cvg>.
- . Barber, P. "What is a Peculiar?" *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, 3, no.16 (1995): 299-312. doi:10.1017/S0956618X00002210
- . Barlow, Christopher, David M. Howard, John Szymanski and Graham F. Welch. "Vocal Production and Listener Perception of Trained English Cathedral Girl and Boy Choristers." *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* no.147 (2002):81-86. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40319392>.
- . Beale, Robert. "Keep Boys Singing" *The Musical Times* 132, no. 1780 (June 1991): 314-318. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/966546>.
- . Burgess, Kaya. "Joyful and triumphant, cathedral choirgirls finally overtake the boys." *The Times*, December 20, 2019.
- . Butler, Judith. "Critically Queer." *GLQ: A Journal in Gay and Lesbian Studies* 1, no.1 (1993): 17-32.
- . Butler, Judith. "Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion." In *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, 81-99. London: Routledge Press, 2011.
- . Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and the Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40, no.4 (1988): 519-531.
- . Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- . Davies, Madeleine. "What girls are bringing to the choir party." *Church Times*, May 27, 2016. <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2016/27-may/news/uk/what-girls-are-bringing-to-the-choir-party>. doi: 10.1016/j.jvoice.2018.01.014.
- . Doyle, Enya. "Let My Voice Be Heard: Barriers to Gender Diversity and Inclusion in Anglican Cathedral Music." PhD thesis., Durham University, 2020.
- . Forbes, Joanna. "Twenty-first century Woman: girls can't be choristers." *Joanna Forbes L'Estrange Blog*, February 13, 2019. <http://www.joannaforbeslestrange.com/girl-choristers/twenty-first-century-woman-girls-cant-be-choristers>.
- . Freeman, Emily. "Anglican Cathedral Choirs: The Boy Chorister Tradition and the Other Gender." Undergrad diss., University of Winchester, March 2015.
- . Galen, Sherwin. "Single Sex Schools and the Antisegregation Principle." *N.Y.U Review of Law and Social Change* 30, no.1 (2005): 35-87.
- . Gelman, Susan A., Arnold K. Ho, Marjorie Rhodes and Steven O. Roberts. "Making Boundaries Great Again: Essentialism and Support for Boundary-Enhancing Initiatives." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 43, no.12 (2017): 1643-1658.
- . Himonides, Evangelos, David M. Howard, Matthew Owens and Graham F. Welch. "The Developing Female Chorister Voice: Case-Study Evidence of Musical Development." *J Voice* 33, no.4 (July 2019): 516-525.

- . Howard, David M. and Graham F. Welch. "Gendered Voice in the Cathedral Choir." *Psychology of Music* 30, no.1 (2002): 102-120. doi:10.1177/0305735602301008.
- . Howard, David M., and Graham F. Welch. "Female Chorister Voice Development: A Longitudinal Study at Wells, UK." *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* no.153/154 (2002):63-70. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40319142>.
- . Howard, David M., John Szymanski and Graham F. Welch. "Listeners' Perception of English Cathedral Girl and Boy Choristers." *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 20, no.1 (Winter 2002): 35-49. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/mp.2002.20.1.35>.
- . Jackson, Nicholas. *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis for Treble Voices in the Lydian Mode*. 1977.
- . Jackson, Nicholas. *Te Deum*. 1983. Revised Edition 2003. (For soprano, alto, tenor, bass and organ.)
- . Juul, Anders, Steinunn Magnusdottir, Sven Prytz, Thomas Scheike and Niels E. Skakkebaek. "Age at voice break in Danish boys: effects of pre-pubertal body mass index and secular trend." *International Journal of Andrology* 30 (2007): 537-542.
- . Mackey, Amanda. "New Voice: The Patterns and Provisions for Girl Choristers in the English Cathedral Choirs" Undergrad diss., Bangor University, May 2015.
- . Morrison, Richard. "We have women priests yet cathedrals block girl choirs." *The Times*, March 24, 2016. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/we-have-women-priests-yet-cathedrals-block-girl-choirs-tjmsqljzl>.
- . Mould, Alan. *The English Chorister: A History*. London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007.
- . Mount, Timothy. "Treble Voices in Choral Music: Women, Men, Boys or Castrati?" *The Choral Journal* 16, no.5 (January 1976): 26-31. American Choral Directors Association.
- . Owens, Matthew and Graham F. Welch. "Choral Pedagogy and the Construction of Identity: Girls." In *The Oxford Handbook of Choral Pedagogy*, edited by Frank Abrahams and Paul D. Head, 167-184. Oxford University Press, 2017.
- . Phillips, Ben. "The glorious song of old? The history of music-making of St Davids Cathedral, with specific reference and concentration on the twentieth century." Thesis., University of York, 2021.
- . Phillips, Ben. "The introduction of Girl Choristers at St Davids Cathedral" *Friends of Cathedral Music Magazine*, August, 2015.
- . Prigg, Mark. "Could the choir boy disappear? Scientists find boys voices are breaking earlier than ever due to a 'rich diet'" *The Daily Mail*, January 11, 2013. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2260804/Are-days-choirboy-numbered-Scientists-boys-voices-breaking-earlier-rich-diet.html>
- . Roderick, Selwyn, prod. *Organ Organ*. BBC Wales. BBC Two Sunday 1st March 1970, 22:55.
- . Salomone, Rosemary C. "Feminist Voices in the Debate over Single-Sex Schooling: Finding Common Ground." *Michigan Journal of Gender and Law* 11, no.1 (2004): 63-95.
- . Stewart, Elizabeth Claire. "The impact of the introduction of girl choristers at Salisbury and its influence on other British Anglican cathedral choirs." PhD thesis., University of London, November 2020.
- . The Times Reporter. "Peter Boorman: organist and choirmaster." *The Times*, October 28, 2009. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/peter-boorman-organist-and-choirmaster-3kt9z077kz8>.

- . Welch, Graham F. "Culture and gender in a cathedral music context: An active theory exploration" In *A Cultural Psychology of Music Education*, edited by M.S Barrett, 225-258. Oxford University Press, 2011.
- . West, Katrina. "New People Singing Old Songs: Considering Ely Cathedral Girls' Choir through the Magnificat." MPhil thesis., University of Cambridge, 2016.

Appendix 1 - Interviews

Telephone interview with Jane Leggett [one of the original girl choristers at St Davids Cathedral] - Monday, 8th February 2021.

1. What do you remember about starting as a chorister at St Davids Cathedral?
I've been thinking hard about this and I believe I'm right in saying that I would have joined the choir for the first time sometime in the summer/autumn of 1967 and I think that's the case because I would have done my O-levels. I was a pupil at Ysgol Dewi Sant, and I was getting ready to go back to start my A levels. Music was going to be one of my A level subjects and of course Rosalyn Charles that you spoke to was my music teacher. So, you see there was that connection but also there was a connection with Peter Boorman who was the organist at the cathedral. He was actually my flute teacher at school because we didn't have peripatetic teachers come out to St Davids because it was too far. Peter used to teach anybody who wanted to play any orchestral instrument. Peter would literally just come and teach you. It was quite remarkable really. Rosalyn arrived in St Davids school when I was a third former and it was really, looking back at it now it's easy to see, it really was such a huge chance as it were because she was so enthusiastic about her music and literally just kicked me off on what has been my life really. It is amazing. So, between the two of them I think, knowing of my interest in music, they then asked me, would I like to sing in the choir. So, I think it must have been in that summer that I started rehearsing with them and then started singing with them. For me, it was just wonderful. It was such an opportunity and opened the doors to quite frankly, a repertoire that I probably wouldn't have come to grips with at all otherwise. Liturgical vocal music is quite a specialized area, one that I love and of course this was my opportunity and so this is how it happened. I think it was a bit tricky because I wasn't an Anglican. I think to be honest with you that a special dispensation was made on my behalf which I think was probably quite unusual, I don't know how they swung that. I remember Dean Jenkins was the Dean in my day and he was such a generous and kind person that he just didn't make an issue of it. Under normal circumstances there probably would have been some problems, but in any case, I was allowed to come, and I was allowed to sing.

2. Did you enjoy your time as a chorister at St Davids?

Well, I mean without a doubt, I jumped at it. We'd had opportunities as soon as Rosalyn arrived at St Davids School, everything was quite frankly transformed musically which was just amazing and so we'd already had opportunities to be launched into some quite challenging choral music. We'd tackle anything from Bach to Britten and we were thrown into Ceremony of Carols so by the time I started singing with the cathedral choir, I was really up for it as it were. You know, I was starting to study A-level music which I was thrilled about and I was the first person in St Davids to take music as an A-level subject. It was not something that was encouraged as such but of course with the backing of Rosalyn, I was the only person by the way in my year. We did have a few more the year after, but I was in glorious isolation. Quite an experience. I can remember, you were saying about some of my memories, things that really shine out for me would have been tackling composers like Herbert Howells. Where would I have met Howells otherwise? That was the incredible thing. I knew at the time that I was lucky. I knew that this was a real opportunity. The fantastic thing as well is that it gives you such opportunities to promote your sight-reading and you've absolutely got to be on the ball. Again, it pushed me you see way beyond and these sight-reading and vocal techniques, these are things that were absolutely key to me in the future - becoming a student at university reading music and then being a music teacher. This was the foundation of it all for me. So fortunate. Nothing gives you that foundation and I was

fortunate that I had such an excellent music teacher as well in Rosalyn who was there to stretch me every bit of the way. But the combination of cathedral music and what I was getting in school was just a rare, rare opportunity. Peter and Rosalyn were absolutely central to it all. And there we were, it's a remarkable thing because we're not talking about some large city or anything like that, we're talking about St Davids. These wonderful opportunities there, it's fantastic. You're talking about enjoyment, everything to do with it was enjoyment to me. We had special things as well. We sang for the Prince of Wales after the Investiture. I think the service was held a day or two after the Investiture in Caernarfon. He toured Wales, but the first place that I believe I'm right in saying he came was St Davids Cathedral. We had a service which of course we prepared for for months so that was a big occasion. The other one I'm sure Rosalyn told you was that we had an opportunity to go to Abergavenny of all places. A friend of Peter and Rosalyn was a surgeon and was married to Ann Griffiths the harpist. He also had a great passion for music and conducted the choral society in that area. They had a very good choral society in Abergavenny and William Mathias had recently written the choral work St Teilo. We were invited as the choristers in St Davids. There are sections of St Teilo that are written for choristers. We went up and stayed there for a few days and sang. I don't think it was the first performance of St Teilo, but it would have been one of the earliest performances. Oddly enough when I got to university, we performed it at university as well. I played in it that time, I didn't actually sing, I played flute. That was quite an occasion. We were very excited and of course it was William Mathias himself conducting and that was the only occasion I ever met William Mathias. We were very much in awe of him. It's not every day. There were little things, I'm sure there were many other things, it's just my memory doesn't pin in on these things quite as well as it should.

3. Do you believe that girl choristers were largely accepted in St Davids Cathedral? Now then, these next few questions I find really interesting. I've been wracking my brains and thinking back over it. Some of the things I'm telling you now are impressions you know. I'm just remembering the way that I felt. I definitely felt that we were accepted in every sense. I really do. When I think about this, I've been trying to think well why was that the case? Because the truth is, this was at the time, this was something very unusual and of course I suddenly caught myself thinking, these days you have a Dean who is a woman, you have a Bishop that is a woman. We are talking about thirty years or so before the first women were ordained into the ministry. Thirty years before and here we were, girls. It was a big thing and I think only perhaps because it was in St Davids that this could have happened. I think if it had been in one of the big city cathedrals, I don't think it could have happened in the same way. I don't think there would have been the support because I think you see, from my memory, the girl choristers really kicked off in St Davids as a necessity. There weren't enough boys and either we didn't have choristers, or we used the girls. You know just as you do in rural communities where you have to sort of bend a bit, this is exactly what happened. It worked. Again, getting back to Peter Boorman and to Rosalyn they were the ones then that had to make it work if you see what I mean. They had the vision; they saw it could work and then went about making it work. I never remember anybody being negative about what the girls were doing. Quite the opposite in fact. Certainly, with Peter and Rosalyn, they used to actually work really hard to build our confidence. They had high expectations of us, and I think we were happy to work, really happy to try and meet these expectations. We knew we were a bit unusual. There might have been traditionalists that might have looked down their noses a bit at it, but for us, we really did used to take pride in very much producing, trying, I don't think they do it as much these days but in our day, we honestly were trying to sound like the boys. We really were. We used to spend a lot of time thinking about the quality of sound. I'm sure you do as well but you know. We really felt that we needed to sound and

make a sound that would fit into the Anglican tradition. Which was quite a task to take on frankly under the circumstances, but we certainly did our best. We tended to be a little on the older side. It was interesting to hear you say that the girls now start earlier, much earlier than we did. I would have just had my sixteenth birthday when I joined the choir, and I would have been there until I went to college, so I was there for two years basically. Even the younger ones, I think they were mostly fourteen, fifteen. We were sort of on that older age. I may be wrong there, but that's what I think initially and perhaps as things settled down, they began to bring in younger girls.

I remember Arnold Boorman as a little boy. We would have seemed quite old to him you see. I remember Arnold, I remember him well. You know, of course when he came up to Ysgol Dewi Sant he would have been involved in all our school music making as well.

It's interesting you know, the aspect of the sound that the girls were going to make. When other cathedrals caught up a bit and started using girls, there was a lot of discussion. I remember the discussions, should girls try to sound like boys? I think initially there was a lot of that and there was quite a specific effort. The truth is the girls voice is a different sound and as you say, the maturity of the voice, we're at a different point in the development of the voice which is ever so interesting as well. We used to try hard. I think that's exactly what happened. We're back at the really early days here.

4. Were you treated any differently to the boy choristers?

Now then this is another interesting question. The truth is of course that I wouldn't have known how boys choristers were treated because frankly, by the time I arrived, we were girls and initially at least, with the exception of Arnold, he was about the only boy I remember singing as a treble. I suspect because we were slightly older, certainly a lot was expected from us and I think we were expected to be solid musicians, good readers and that was just taken for granted. I think of course a lot of the boys, the younger lads, I know they're younger but of course they're very focused, the boy choristers. Exceptionally so in the big cathedrals but I feel that we were respected for what we were bringing and for our experience in that we were slightly older then. One of the things I can remember, now I think you wear different robes these days and you wear surplices as well don't you. Now you see in our day, this was one of the huge discussions was what were the girls going to wear. Big discussions. I mean I wouldn't have been there for most of them but certainly, you were aware that there'd been a lot of argi bargi and in the end (I don't know if you've ever seen them, they're probably still hanging around there somewhere) but we used to wear academic gowns then. I can remember they were V neck and then there was a big issue about what you wore underneath because of course the V neck gave you a little glimpse of something else. I do remember occasionally somebody would wear something, or they'd just come off the beach and there'd be a bit of tut tutting because somebody had something. The truth is that most of us knew, we kept something very non-descript to wear underneath. Then on important occasions or certainly if we were broadcasting or televised or anything like that, we actually used to wear our school uniform. So, in the V you would see our shirt and our ties because we used to wear shirts and ties and that was the way it worked. Ours were a dark claret colour. Dark, nice colour, lovely colour. That's what we used to wear, and they were quite long. Not full length, we wouldn't wear trousers by the way, just school shoes and tights or something. I think probably what we were wearing would have been based on what women were wearing in parish choirs because I think some parish choirs had women singing in them and I think this is what they wore. Men in the back row wore traditional robes with surplices and Arnold wore the traditional, similar to what is worn now, what you would expect choristers to wear. I do have a faint memory that it was always a slight issue and what we should have underneath. It wasn't a big V, it was only a small V.

5. When singing at St Davids Cathedral, did you find the repertoire challenging? Yes, it was challenging but oh my goodness I relished it. I mean this was what I was doing there really. This is what it was all about. I hit it at the time. I'd got the experience. Rosalyn had been pushing me previously when I was doing my O-levels and I was absolutely ready for this. I was catapulted into the middle of it, but you know, we used to rehearse hard, these things don't just happen, you work. We did work but we loved it and I loved it. It was wonderful and as I said, quite frankly it was in every way, the combination of the cathedral and my A-level studies at Ysgol Dewi Sant, these were literally the foundations for everything I've done. It had a massive impact on what I went on to do. I've told Rosalyn this on countless occasions. It's the wonder of the fact that we could have been in this little rural area nearly falling off the edge of Wales as it were and still, we were engaging in these things. It's amazing.

6. At the time did you realise that it was one of the first cathedrals in the UK to include girl choristers?

Now then, you know I think we probably did have an inkling of it. We were certainly aware that this was very unusual. We definitely knew that, but we were also very up for it. We were encouraged to have confidence in what we were doing, and we never felt and I'm sure this is a tribute to the people around us, we never felt that we were second in line to anything or second best. We were the choristers and they happened to be girls. Yes, we knew this was unusual and this didn't happen elsewhere, no doubt about that, but I suppose we must have talked about it. There's a little story I'll slip in here. By my age you've got to watch your memory you see but I definitely have a memory. It would probably have been Peter Boorman in a rehearsal talking to the choir and talking especially to the choristers. We'd done a broadcast; it would have to have been a Radio 3 one. It wasn't traditional, we did a few Evensong's, but this was sung Eucharist because I'm sure we sang Herbert Howells. I think it went out on the radio, probably Radio 3 in those days. It was a big occasion. We spent months and months preparing for it, I can remember that, so it was something big. In any case, it had gone off and gone as well as we'd hoped, and I can remember Peter coming to a rehearsal and saying to us that he had a letter to read. He read out a letter from the choristers of St Pauls Cathedral and it was a letter to the choristers of St Davids Cathedrals. It was something like, they'd spoken about how they'd enjoyed hearing perhaps it was the Herbert Howells and then they said they wanted to congratulate the *boys*. Of course, could they have been deceived? You know I honestly think that perhaps they had been. Perhaps broadcasting sounds weren't quite as good in those days and I'm sure that might have covered up a few things. It amused us and I remember us just thinking my goodness, have we actually made these lads think. Obviously, they weren't aware that we were girls and we just accepted that. I'm sure I'm right in saying this because I don't think I could have made that up and it's a memory I've had for a long time. Strange one that one. That would have tickled us pink. We were always pleased if we'd got away with it.

7. Was it seen as an historical moment?

Now then, I'm not sure that we thought of it in those terms simply because we were too busy getting on with it. For us, it was a reality. We girls, we were choristers at the cathedral and to be honest with you we didn't have a lot of contact with other cathedrals, not even one's in Wales. I can't tell you what was happening in Llandaff or St Asaph or Bangor or anything. We certainly had listened to boys singing. I certainly would have been, and I would have known the sound produced by some of the best boy choristers at the time. We just got on with it really and I don't think we thought of it as being particularly historical. It was a reality; this

is what we were doing. Whether we thought it was going to perhaps when it was started, you know because I wasn't there at the very beginning. But my understanding is that at the very beginning it was something. The girls were put together because there was a broadcast coming up and there weren't enough boys. Things weren't working out and so, certainly that was the story I was told. Peter appeared at Ysgol Dewi Sant (this would have been when I was younger) and said look, I need some girls to sing this service. I think we just accepted it at that face value. By now, I look back and I certainly do see it as being historic but sadly I'm not sure there's been a great deal of attention paid to it you know.

I've seen things about Salisbury and thinking at the time, hey hang on a minute we were there rather a long time before hand and it's quite sad actually that so little attention has been given. I suppose perhaps the argument would have been that Salisbury would have been strictly speaking Church of England whereas we were Church in Wales. We were the ones that sort of started it in Wales. It's not fair. I think again it's an indication that St Davids is a long way away from everywhere. People just don't pay a great deal of attention. I think there would be a greater awareness by now and of course things have transformed in the interim. Totally transformed. It's wonderful what's happened in the interim. I'm delighted that the girls are singing in cathedrals and delighted that they're still singing in St Davids. I had the privilege of getting down there and listening to them on a number of occasions. I absolutely love it. I always look back at my time there and think the continuity is wonderful. Here they are all these years later and it's gone from strength to strength.

The balance in St Davids was forced as it were initially in the direction of the girls, but it worked. It's been allowed to continue to work which is absolutely fine. The other thing I was thinking of, before this awful lockdown. My husband's sister lives in Norwich. When we do travel across, we often call in Ely and if we do I go to services and there's a very good choir in Ely. There's an extremely good girls' choir. It was quite interesting because one year (probably four or five years ago) we were there. They have a wonderful Advent candle there. They've been doing it for years and years. We were there and we managed to get tickets and we went to it and do you know, it was so interesting that it was principally the girl choristers, and this is one of their most prestigious services of the year. Ely is known for it. It was principally the girl choristers. They were very good.

8. What do you believe to be the reason behind the decline of boy choristers when you began singing at St Davids Cathedral?

Do you know, I think it's a complex issue. I'll just throw a few things into the mix really. Thinking back to that time and the way things were then, I think without a doubt there had been a general decline in church attendance so that's a background to it all. Parish church choirs I think were struggling badly at that time and I think unfortunately they had continued to struggle. To an extent I think singing had become less popular in some schools or shall we go to the other side of it and say less was given to, you don't know. Particularly perhaps amongst boys. You have to remember it's a rural area so you simply don't have the numbers and remembering the challenging repertoire that those boys would have had to have sing; in the absence of a formal choir school, it's going to be difficult to find boys who a) have the voice and b) the ability to stay with this discipline because this style of discipline singing makes huge demands on these youngsters. I don't know, I think it was a mix of all of those things in St Davids at that time. It just came together and there simply weren't the numbers of boys available. And they need good voices and the ability to follow the music, it just got to a point where the through put just couldn't be maintained.

9. Do you think these factors remain the same for the decline of boy choristers in cathedrals since, leading to present day?

Now that is also a very interesting question. These are purely my impressions because I haven't researched this. I could be completely off but my instinct says that certainly in cathedrals there has been something of a resurgence of boy choristers and of course, whilst we're at it, there's also been a great growth on the girl's side as well which is wonderful. I think this has been particularly for cathedrals. I think it ties in with the fact that most cathedrals have cathedral schools which makes life completely different. I think when you have a cathedral school bringing a group of boys together and rehearsing them on a daily basis, which is what you would be able to do, makes all of this possible. Very hard to do it if it's not. Of course, to throw in as well I think there has been a big increase in interest in this twenty-first century in evensong at our cathedrals. I think people in the big cities, they time evensong so that people are leaving work. Apparently, people will just go, they go to evensong. I think that has possibly tied into it as well. Parents value the education I think that the choristers will often receive, musical education and of course it ties in with prestigious cathedral choir schools. You can't separate it from that. I think those have held their popularity; people are very conscious of them. Those are the positive sides of things, so on that side I think there has been something of a resurgence.

But, really sadly I think, what at one time would have been feeding the more rural cathedrals would have been good quality church parish choirs. Those have pretty much vanished. Those are fewer and fewer and fewer and ones that actually bring boys forward are a rarity. Sadly, in the absence of cathedral choir schools, having a boy who perhaps has an interest in going forward as a chorister and finding opportunities for them, it would be really difficult to find and that's really sad. It's hard for boys in the absence of bigger cities. I think the exception again would be St Davids. They've got the boys now; they have a group of boys but of course not carrying the weight of the services in the way that the girl choristers do. My passion is to really give good opportunities, high quality opportunities to as many young singers as possible and that's a real passion of mine. Wherever we are, it shouldn't necessarily be tied exclusively to the wonderful work of the cathedral choir schools but it is exclusive. I'm desperate that that quality can at least spread out a bit. I don't know a lot about it, but my son talks to me about it. Apparently in Leeds churches and cathedrals work very hard with all the comprehensive schools and church schools to bring forward a strong programme of youth singing and apparently that does bear fruit. There's been difficult times just at the moment but they're beginning to build a big name for themselves. It is encouraging. The truth is of course, I think if I go back to when I was a schoolgirl, that was the situation then. It was difficult for the rural areas or anywhere other than areas that had prestigious cathedral schools, choir schools, it is much easier for them. It's easy to be discouraged but one way or another, if you feel it's worth doing and love that sort of music then somehow you fight your way through it all. You do your best and that's all we can do and there's absolutely no point in being discouraged.

Telephone interview with Andrea Taylor [one of the first girl choristers at St Davids Cathedral] - Tuesday, 12th January 2021.

1. What do you remember about starting as a chorister at St Davids Cathedral?

This is a very vivid memory. It was in the days of Peter Boorman. He was the organist and he had been there for some time; he was a wonderful character and apart from playing the organ he played a lot of instruments. He was quite inspiring really.

When I was 10 or 11 Peter started this choir and he was the organist and choir master. That would have been 1962. Then I went away for four years and in that time, Peter Boorman was still there as organist and choir master and there was a very good music teacher called Rosalyn Charles who taught music at Ysgol Dewi Sant. She and Peter were very inspiring. I did A level music, and they were fantastic. Rosalyn had her own school choir which was really good. We used to do quite a lot of concerts and things. Peter was her sort of back up, he would have played for her. She really was the one who brought the school choir into the cathedral where we started singing quite a lot. Because of these instruments as well, we used to have little soirees down at the organist lodgings. Peter would be on a double bass and Rosalyn would be on a piano, I played the clarinet and somebody else played the clarinet, somebody else played the flute, the trombone and the violin and suddenly we played music. It was fantastic. In those days the Welsh Opera Company would come to Tasker Milward School [a secondary school in the area] and Peter would hire a minibus to take this crowd of us into these concerts. He was an absolute character. That's the background of the whole of that time.

Peter decided to form this girls' choir because he was having a few issues with getting the boys to commit to attending services every Sunday. He started this girls' choir at the Welsh service which always took place at the high altar on a Sunday morning at 9:30. It was a Eucharist service, and it was a very simple service really. Sometimes we would sing a little bit of an anthem or something, but it was really quite a simple time. That must have gone on for a good year in 1962.

People were not very happy about this. Remember in those days you didn't have female priests or anything so to have girls singing a service was not highly acceptable. Quite frowned upon. Of course, the Welsh service on a Sunday had its own congregation which wouldn't necessarily have gone to the 11 o'clock. In those days the choir only sang on a Sunday. They didn't sing in the week at all. This Sunday girls' choir sang at the 9:30. We would just sing responses really. It was wasn't a very taxing sing in a funny sort of way. Then he had, and I think this must have been 1963/64, by which time I was moving from St Davids. There was a big flu epidemic, and a lot of children were off. Peter didn't have a huge number of boys in the choir anyway, and so he decided to move the girls' choir from the 9:30 to join up with the boys to sing two services which were the 11 o'clock and the six o'clock. That went on for years and years and in the course of time it was accepted, and everything was fine. It was just those first few years at the beginning where people would say the girls' voices are not the same as the boys' voices. Of course, they're not are they. The soprano line is a different sound isn't it. He had a bit of a mixed choir then. That's really how it all started. After Peter came Nicholas Jackson and then after Nicholas Jackson came Malcolm Watts. Arwel Davies used to play the organ sometimes and he was sort of into singing in the choir. It was definitely after Malcolm Watts that Kerry Beaumont came, and he really lifted the choir bigly, it really was fabulous. He formed a second choir; we were an adult choir and we used to sing every other Friday for evensong in the high altar. After that Simon Pearce took that choir on. It's not until you leave that you realise what a privilege it was to sing there and what you gained from it. It also gives you a confidence, I think. My daughter Sally was in the

choir. She sang with Kerry Beaumont and then she went away for the last two years of sixth form. She was in the choir for ten years and absolutely loved it.

In the girls' choir, in the original choir there was Pammy Roberts who is now Pammy Watkins, she was a teacher in the primary school in St Davids. She and her sister Hazel Roberts they both sang in the choir the same time as me. I think Peter's own daughter Celia Boorman sang with us for a while. We were probably about eight or ten of us which wasn't a lot really. No men just girls' voices when he started us originally, but obviously when we went into the nave then of course we were full choir. 1962 the choir started, and I would say it was about 1964 by the time I left. They always had these maroon cloaks and gowns. They were proper university robes and you had a little white collar. At the very beginning it was those robes that we had.

2. At the time, did you realise that it was one of the first UK cathedrals to include girl choristers?

Yes, we did and it was only because Peter talked about it. Obviously I was a child and he was hearing it from a different aspect. It was very controversial. I can remember Salisbury brought girls in and it made the headlines in one of the Sunday papers. First Cathedral to bring in girl choristers and I can remember Peter being absolutely livid about it because St Davids hadn't been recognised as being the first one.

3. Were treated any differently to the boy choristers?

I don't think so really. We didn't have any boys at the beginning because it was just us girls, so we didn't rehearse with the boys. Us girls used to rehearse in a little room above the main door in the nave where I think they now keep the music. We used to go up this spiral staircase and we used to go up there because it was warmer. It was quite cold in the cathedral and I don't think the cathedral even had central heating in those days, so it was quite draughty. He probably did treat us differently because we were girls in comparison to boys, I don't know. Peter was a very gentle man with a very soft, well-spoken voice and I mean sometimes he would get a bit fed up with us all, but he wasn't an aggressive man at all. He was a very patient man. I think if he felt that you enjoyed the music it was all a good experience all round. Maybe he got a bit more fed up with the boys because they wanted to go out and play football.

4. What do you believe was the main reason behind the decline of boy choristers when you began singing at St Davids Cathedral?

I think there were two things. I think there was a lack of population because in those days the two primary schools were very much smaller and I think it went through a phase that as a boy, it was a bit embarrassing to be singing in a choir. And so therefore, it was more difficult to get boys to commit to two services every Sunday and a rehearsal in the week. I think that was the main problem.

5. Do you believe these factors remain the same for the decline of boy choristers in cathedrals since, leading to present day?

I think they do. I think it all depends on the person at the top who's running it. I think they have to meet the boys halfway. Sport is quite important; I'm not saying that it isn't important to girls, but it is important to boys isn't it. I remember my own son being in the choir. He was only in the choir about two years, and they were choosing people to go into the football team on a Sunday. I rang Malcolm Watts and said I'm terribly sorry, this has come up and it's quite important to Mark. Could he be excused this morning and Malcolm Watts said no. He's committed to the choir, which is rightly so, but it was only a one off. It put Mark off

completely and he wasn't in the choir very long after that. Of course, football suddenly became a Sunday morning sport and they started having football matches on a Sunday morning. If you had a child that loved both, they had to make a choice. I think it wasn't so much for the girls because you didn't hear about a hockey match on a Sunday.

6. When singing at St Davids Cathedral did you find the repertoire challenging? The repertoire really started to change bigly with Kerry Beaumont coming and he was very keen on pronunciation and putting colour into the way they sang. I think the cathedral choir did go up leaps and bounds after that.

If you go on YouTube, there's a recording of the choir when the Queen came to give St Davids City Status. The organist then was Geraint Bowen, and he was really very good. On this YouTube thing it shows you the service or part of the service. If you listen to the choir, they're really good. There's no doubt about it that the choir in the cathedral now is far superior to the choir that was in the cathedral in the olden days. It's a wonderful place to sing in. Until this lockdown I used to sing in the festival choir. I used to sing in John S. Choir as well and that was a wonderful experience. To be able to sing in that cathedral with the orchestra and the organ and the acoustics are so wonderful and at festivals it's a fabulous experience. They're good memories.

I listen to gossip sometimes, and I don't think they're finding it so easy to recruit useful choir members and it hasn't been an easy year has it. It needs to be continuous really. They need babies to come in every year to go up the ranks to learn.

Zoom interview with Pat Ginty [one of the first girl chorister probationers at St Davids Cathedral] - Thursday, 25th March 2021.

One memory I recall is not having anything to wear for the Investiture of the Prince of Wales service. For a twelve-year-old that was a really difficult thing. At the last rehearsal, the dress rehearsal with a camera and everything, you could see people flying around and I felt very much the outsider. Nobody was taking any notice of me and I didn't know until the following day whether I was going to be allowed to sing in the service. It was quite traumatic. Going on from there, there were some downsides of being particularly one of the first young girls there, so I don't know if you want to add that to your list of questions.

1. What do you remember about starting as a chorister at St Davids Cathedral?

We went to the secondary school at the age of eleven. I'm a February child so I was eleven for quite a time. When I joined the school, I became involved in the music department very quickly and the Eisteddfod comes up in March. 1st March was always the St Davids Day Eisteddfod, and the school Eisteddfod would always come in after that. In school we had a session every week called Choral where we'd sing. There was only one teacher, and she was head of department [Rosalyn Charles] and what she used to do was teach the Eisteddfod set pieces in the time running up to the Eisteddfod, so we all knew them. I decided to enter the Eisteddfod. Because my birthday is in February, by the time March came I was in the twelve to fifteen age group - there was the under twelve and then twelve to fifteen. I was up against the fifteen-year-olds. Never got placed and I didn't expect to but after that I got taken to one side by the music teacher, who happened to be sub-organist at the cathedral and asked would I like to join the cathedral choir and that was that. I joined the cathedral choir soon after that in the April. I would have been twelve so that makes it 1969. My friend Gill and I both sang at the Eisteddfod and we joined together and were classified as the first two probationers. We were joined later, I cannot tell you how much later, it seemed like a long time but when you're kids these things do seem like a long time, but we were joined by another girl called Jane Williams. We were the first three. The other girls were all older than us. We joined as twelve-year-olds. The other girls were coming to the end of their third year at secondary school. They were the youngest ones. There were an awful lot who were a lot older than that who left in the following September. So, there was a big shake up in September. What I'm trying to tell you is that they were over sixteen, must have been seventeen and eighteen and then there three who were around sixteen. We were really young coming in compared to them. I'm not sure how long they'd been singing. I'd say they'd probably been there two or three years before we joined.

That's how we joined, and it was a matter of being thrown in the deep end. Just straight in. Whoever wasn't there, that was the robe you wore. Luckily, there seemed to always be somebody not there because there weren't any spares. It was quite a long time later that spares turned up. Everybody had their own and I think they were all made to measure because I suspect the girls would wear their school uniform when they first started. Then robes turned up after that.

We were pretty much thrown into the deep end. No separate lessons or practices. We'd turn up for the treble practice which used to be 6:30pm on a Thursday and then the men would come at 7:00pm and that's all the practice the girls did. That was for the entirety of when I was there with Peter Boorman. When you think about it that's huge. I can remember Peter Boorman saying once, I don't know the context and I can't remember who was there, but he said, "no, I don't teach the girls anything, they teach each other." That's what he said. I never had a singing lesson ever. I remember choir practices where we didn't sing any repertoire at all. We did things like St John's Passion and the Schubert Four Part Lord's Prayer. In my

time, we never did it in a service, but we learnt it in practice time and sang it in four parts in practice. At that time, we would have been no more than sixteen trebles. We were expected to behave as professionals, and we were encouraged to take music home to learn. There were special choir folders which we were given. I can remember for a broadcast we had special ones made. They were just paper folders, but they were labelled with our position like, Cantores 1 or Decani 5. We were given that music and we had to carry that all around with us. Cathedral schools operate by having daily practices. We didn't have to take the music home with us, apart from that specific broadcast that I'm telling you about. I certainly did and some of my friends did. We did used to learn the notes at home. So, I suppose that's why it all kind of worked out.

2. Did you enjoy your time as a chorister at St Davids?

Absolutely, I lived for the choir. For a teenager as I became in that setting, it was the only place where you were treated like an adult. You know we really were treated like adults. When I look back at it, I can see how strange it was. We were there to work and we had our part to play, and we had to play it properly.

3. Do you believe the girl choristers were largely accepted when you arrived at St Davids Cathedral?

Yes. You see, all the hard work had been done by the others. The choir was established. It was not only established in the cathedral, but it had been established in St Davids. It was known. I knew boys who had sung in the choir, they were in my class at school, they were friends and never really had any push back from them which looking back on it, that is quite surprising. Thinking about it, I have to wonder what the choir had been like in the last days of the boys. I suspect it was probably dying on its feet. I think the broadcast thing was a hard wall. I think things had probably been dying off. Why would the boys have not turned up for a broadcast? I think it's because the interest had gone and I suspect they had been struggling to keep the music going on a Sunday, prior to that. One of the things that is coming to mind is that smaller families might have something to do with it. I think that's an avenue that is worth pursuing. I can remember massive families when I grew up with seven or eight plus children. Things changed very quickly in the sixties. The large families were older mothers and the youngest of them were my kind of age. But most of the people my kind of age, it was two, three, I don't think I can even remember a family of four. Not with people whose parents were the same age as mine. I think that could have been significant because in a place like St Davids where you've got pretty much a fixed number of houses, if suddenly the child per house ratio goes down enormously then you're going to have fewer boys and girls. That could have a phenomenal effect on something like recruiting a boys' choir. You also have the church going families and that all stopped. Of course, cathedral attendance when I was growing up was in the minority. You had the other places of worship.

There were two primary schools in St Davids across the road from each other. The Voluntary Aided School (Church School) and then there was the Council School. The schools were pretty much of a size until the Voluntary School moved from the building which is now known as Tyr Pereryn. That's where I went to primary school. That school moved to the site which is St Davids Primary School now. It moved the year after I left. That's when that school really bumped up its numbers because everybody went to the new school. When I went to primary school there was a terrific fuss in my family because I was the first in my family to go to that school. The tradition was that my family went to the CP School because we were not church people. We were Baptists. As it happened the headteacher of that school used to go out with my Aunt. So, he was a known person to my parents and so that is why I was sent to the Church School. There was a real, I'll call it now a sectarian line, drawn down

St Davids where primary schooling was concerned. Peter Boorman used to come into the primary school from time to time. We always used to go to church for occasions like Ascension Day and St Davids Day. We would be learning the hymns and stuff and Peter would come up for a rehearsal and play the piano whilst we rehearsed the music for those occasions. I wasn't aware that he ever went to the Council School. So, I think this was how the boys might have been recruited because at least Peter was a known quantity to the boys in my school. I seem to remember violin lessons happening at some stage. A group would go down to his place and have lessons during school time.

4. You mentioned at the beginning of our discussion that there were some potential negatives to being a girl chorister? Please may you explain these.

I think the biggest issue is, there wasn't any pastoral care given to the girls. By the time I joined, there was never any "how are you getting on?" "are you coping alright?" there was none of that ever and I think actually, it was an issue. Problems arose from time to time but there was nobody official to talk to. I can tell you, there was no Christian formation whatsoever. We were there to do a job as singers. That was it. The church didn't take particular interest in us apart from we were there to do a job and we did that job. Looking back at that, nowadays to have a choir of young girls with no pastoral care given, people think it is just completely outrageous. That is what I'm saying. We were treated as adults right from the very start. I would say that is a huge negative. We didn't have Sunday school anymore, none of that sort of thing because we were in the choir. If anything happened on a Sunday it happened around the 9:30am services. The only thing is that the Minor Canon would occasionally nag us to go to the 9:30am services because actually, for many years when I was in the choir, even if it was choral eucharist at 11am, we didn't receive communion. That was an innovation that came in later. The only time we received at a choral eucharist service was Easter Sunday and Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. On the Fourth Sunday of the month when it was choral eucharist, when the invitation to receive was issued, we would move immediately into the North and South transepts and we would sing the motet from there. Afterwards we would run like mad to get back into position for the service to continue. We used to get telling's off (for want of a better word) from time to time from the Minor Canon. Haven't seen you at communion for a long time, you need to go to communion. Of course, if we did that, that would be us there for the 9:30am service and we wouldn't get out until 12:15pm which is an awfully long morning.

What I was going to go on from there was recruitment was being done from further afield from St Davids. The third probationer Jane, she lived in Solva and from time to time, other people from Solva came. I wasn't aware of any younger girls coming from the second primary school, certainly when I was there. They wouldn't have had the same church education that we would have had going through the Voluntary School. The Dean and the Minor Canon used to come up and do lessons with the two eldest years in the school every week. The first lesson after assembly would be with them and it would go on until whatever time we stopped for the first break. That's where I learnt most of my church knowledge that I still use today. Going down to the cathedral, walking through the vestry and going through all the vestments, what they were named and the order they were all put on. Going through the Lord's Prayer line by line and what each line meant. All that of course stopped when we went to secondary school and nothing replaced it. As young Christians we had no education at all. I would go as far as to say my education was music. I can quote yards and yards of the Bible, whether it be Psalms or from the books, but it all comes from the music that I have sung. It is interesting in a way, but also a lost opportunity for a lot of the girls.

Just to bring you back to the pastoral thing, as I got older, younger girls were being recruited into the choir. The attrition rate at the top was very fast. We must have lost six or even eight

girls the first September that I was there. That's a huge attrition rate. They really had to recruit quite quickly. That's when the boys came in. Arnold Boorman being one of them and Arwel Davies being the other. Arnold was there from the very start. I often used to sit by him. We used to do puzzles in the sermon and things like that. The boys became useful at the time because there was quite a turnover and as I say, they had to start recruiting younger girls. These were girls from primary school. The girls were quite little and that's where I felt that I did have a responsibility to these younger girls, knowing how I felt, and I was quite a lot older. Some of the pastoral stuff, certainly by the time I became one of the older ones was happening between the girls. Still nothing to support these primary school kids. I know some boys who have been to choir schools and you seem to have these things like choir mothers who are there to do that. There was absolutely nothing like that. The girl choristers have, as an entity developed its own culture and way of doing things and it is passed down from the older ones to the younger ones. The other thing I can tell you is that in my entire time there and this is having gone back as an adult for a few years, is that I never saw a case of girls bursting into tears in rehearsals or in services. Nothing like that. No girly behaviour. Thinking about it, that is remarkable, and they absolutely took it on the nose. I think this is all part of being treated as an adult. It's like there wasn't such a thing as children in cathedral choirs when I started. It was almost as though that was the attitude. There were no children and therefore nobody behaved girly, teenagery, hormonally, none of it. Might have been one or two tears after a service when somebody did a solo that hadn't perhaps gone as well as they wanted it to go. But no huge scenes or anything like that, nothing. Which, with a load of hormonal girls is very strange. We were professionals. You put on a robe and you were a professional and whatever was going on with you disappeared. The number of times I sang with sore throats and sang solos with sore throats. I really would have rather been in bed but turned out to sing a solo or whatever it was. Particularly at that older end of the age group because those solos weren't things that somebody could pick up and sing. They were quite complicated and quite difficult, and you spent a lot of time learning them. Not turning up was unthinkable. Even at that age we learnt to sing where no voice existed.

5. Were you treated any differently to the boy choristers?

They were always younger than me. I don't know if I was recognised as someone who could stand on their own two feet from quite a young age, but I always got put by them. I became quite good friends with them over the years. The Richardson brothers came in Nicholas Jackson's time. I think that certainly in Peter's time, Arnold and Arwel were not given any special treatment that was different to us. The only thing was that they got to carry the candles because they're a matching pair. Girls didn't carry candles in St Davids in those days. When the Richardson boys came, I think quite a fuss was made of them but to be honest, I can see why. Nicholas was looking ahead at potential altos. I think this was why he started the Parish Choir as it was called, for boys. He started this choir, and they sang at the 9:30 service and they were kept separate from us. We never had anything to do with them and I don't think we ever came together to sing services. That choir was a headache and a nightmare and really hard work. I'm not surprised they became amalgamated into the main choir. I think for the same reasons that the boys' choir had died in the first place, it was difficult to get it going and encourage more than six boys at a time to come. I think the Richardson boys were nurtured a bit more. They were encouraged to sing with the Parish Choir, but they were definitely cathedral choir boys. That's the difference there. As far as I'm aware there was no resentment.

I can't remember what the circumstances were, but a time came when there were no adult altos. Arwel, Neil, Alan and Stephen were singing alto in the back row. They were very capable but, they were teenage boys with all the issues teenage boys have and exposed entries

caused problems. I think they were psychological problems rather than vocal problems. Psychology made the vocal problems very difficult. So, Nicholas asked me to go and sing with them in the back row. I became the first fully-fledged female alto in the cathedral choir. Rosalyn Charles did it occasionally, but she always did it from the front row and she always wore a robe. I became the first real alto wearing cassock and surplice because when the girls were still wearing gowns, I was wearing a cassock and surplice and sat with these boys. The anthem that really did it where I had to go and sing with them was 'Rejoice in the Lord Always'. I was there to lead the altos when the entries were really exposed. They were perfectly fine, but they did have this issue. For a number of years with the exception of myself, St Davids Cathedral relied on teenage altos because there weren't any adult altos around at the time. I was around nineteen or twenty. I was in the right place at the right time. I left at the age of eighteen, as you do and I went off to Spain for a year. I came back for Christmas and my grandmother was dying. She lived with my Aunt and I stayed with my Aunt because she needed somebody else to help. I decided that there was no future for me in Spain and so I came back to St Davids to get a job. By that time Peter Boorman had gone and there was this interregnum, no organist and Dean Lawrence Bowen knocked on my door and asked if I would come back to the choir. He himself was running the choir and took choir practices and Arwel used to accompany on the organ. To begin, I was singing in the front row and I realised why he asked me to come because there wasn't really anybody older. The nearest in age to me was probably three or four years younger and there were a lot of younger girls than that. They needed a bit of leadership, vocal leadership. I was the adult at that point, didn't much feel like it, but because of the age difference I was the adult. When Nicholas Jackson was appointed, I said to him straight away that I'm too old and I'll go quite happily but his view was no, we need to keep things going as they are at least until he found his feet and managed to recruit. In fact, he put his wife in the choir as well singing treble. She was a lot younger than him. She and I were the two adult treble's and then there were a lot of younger girls. As I say, I stuck there with them for quite a time until the alto problem became a bit of an issue. I think initially I chopped and changed as and when I was needed in specific pieces but that was quite off putting for the other girls and that's why a formal move was made into the back row. Certainly, we made a record and it's on YouTube. For some reason we did a lot of the recording on the steps going up to the quire. We were all gathered around there. They had to keep moving me until I was right behind the men because I was too loud. If you listen carefully to the recording, you can hear lots of little voices and it's interesting for that reason.

6. At the time, did you realise it was one of the first UK cathedrals to include girl choristers and was it seen as an historical moment?

Yes, we were aware of that. The story of the boys and the broadcast and stuff had gone into folklore by that time, so we were aware of it. But I don't think it was a big thing because we knew that we were a lot different from other cathedrals because we didn't have a choir school and because we were quite isolated from elsewhere. We used to have a big laugh whenever we'd done radio broadcasts because Peter used to get letters saying how lovely his *boys* sounded and things like that and he used to tell us about that. The thing is if you talk about becoming the first girls' choir, you'll have a lot of purists come and tell you you're talking rubbish because we've had a mixed top line. Arnold and Arwel were there. But we really were one of the first. Of course, St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh have had a mixed top line for very many years, but they have a choir school and boys, and the girls go to the choir school together. They're not separated, even in education. I will always dispute Salisbury's claims of being the first. It's all very well and good saying there were boys in there, but we were never a mixed top line in my time. St Davids was the first cathedral choir to recruit girl

choristers. No other boys were recruited in that time. Nobody was looking for boys at the time the girls were there. It was only girls being recruited. That's a point to say that this is why St Davids is unique and this is why St Davids is first. If the initial broadcast happened in 1966, it was three years before I joined and so it took three years to start recruiting. They had to because all the girls were in fifth or sixth year. They may look at Arnold and say it was a mixed top line, but he wasn't originally because he was so young.

Pat Ginty also submitted responses to my questions via email which can be found below:

1. What do you remember about starting as a chorister at St Davids Cathedral?

It was very scary, and I was terrified of doing something wrong. It was very frustrating not having a robe to wear and having to wait to see who did not turn up. Very soon after I started, Prince Charles came to the cathedral as part of his Investiture tour and the special service was televised. By that time, we were 3 probationers and we ended up wearing the academic robes of the Organist and Sub-Organist. As the tallest, I had the longest robe and my mother refused to alter it for me. At the dress rehearsal the evening before I still had nothing to wear, which was very upsetting. I have no idea who altered the robe, and I don't even remember anyone measuring it for me.

2. Did you enjoy your time as a chorister at St Davids?

I really did. I was 12 when I was admitted to the choir and left at 18, when I left school, as did all the other girls. I was invited back by Dean Bowen during an Organist interregnum and continued to sing with the choir until I was 22. (Latterly in the back row as an alto). I loved the music and the concept of serving the church. I regret not making Church Music my career (I was discouraged by everyone because there did not seem to be a career progression for girls and women) but have made up for it later in life by obtaining a Masters in Church Music Studies from Bangor University.

3. Do you believe that girl choristers were largely accepted at St Davids Cathedral?

By the time I was admitted to the choir, girl choristers were seen as perfectly normal.

4. Were you treated any differently to the boy choristers?

There was only one boy in the choir when I joined – the Organist's son Arnold – and he did little singing initially. Later we were joined by another and they were the only two for many years. Two more joined us about 7 years later. I usually ended up having one of the boys seated next to me!

5. When singing at St Davids Cathedral did you find the repertoire challenging?

No. I had no prior experience of choral music and so whatever we sang seemed normal to me. Younger trebles learned from the older ones and sight-reading ability was acquired along with experience. I did notice though, that the Men seemed to have more difficulty and needed more 'note bashing' than the trebles. They had an extra one-hour practice per week, while we had just one-half hour. I can remember being told that they thought we practiced at school – we didn't.

6. At the time, did you realise that it was the first UK cathedral to include girl choristers?

Yes, and I felt very honoured to be given the opportunity.

7. Was it seen as an historical moment?

It probably was, but I was not particularly aware of it. I had schoolfriends and relatives who had been choristers before the girls were brought in.

8. What do you believe to be the reason behind the decline of boy choristers when you began singing at St Davids Cathedral?

I think that there were two factors that were the main issues – the decline of family church going and the availability of new after school activities. The choir had to compete with these other activities, particularly when the boys started at the secondary school. Also, the tradition of singing in the choir was a particularly St Davids thing and I suspect that mixing with boys from other areas at school might have had some effect. St Davids is a small pool to supply 16 choristers from, especially as there were 6 thriving places of worship at the time the boys finished. As an aside, my family was Baptist, but for 3 generations that I know of, the boys were sent to church so that they could sing in the choir.

9. Do you believe these factors remain the same for the decline of boy choristers in cathedrals since, leading to present day?

I think that the main issues – the decline in family church going and the plethora of after school activities continue. I believe that the commitment necessary for the whole family to keep a boy in a cathedral choir is great and as a society, we don't do commitment very well. Broken families, with shared childcare, make committing to practices and services very difficult. I suspect choir schools, especially residential ones, do better.

1. What do you remember about the first girl choristers being introduced at St Davids Cathedral?

I don't remember very much because you see I was part of that generation of English people who came to St Davids on their holidays. I didn't really belong to the community although the older generation thought that they did. They arrived and thought that they owned the world and that would be like my parents. That still goes on in St Davids today by the way with all the second homeowners, that's my personal opinion. But to some extent it's a truism about St Davids. People arrive and they think they're going to change the world and they don't. But at that time, my parents had established themselves in St Davids. My father was a retired public-school master, and he started the book shop which of course I still own in St Davids. He came from that old school of thought; he was a high church Anglican, and he would have been shocked entirely by the idea of women Bishops or women priests. That would have been beyond his comprehension. In fact, he made a bit of a name for himself at one stage. I can't remember what year it was, when the first female member of staff had been appointed at St Davids Cathedral. It was a lady deaconess. She was asked to preach at matins on a Sunday morning. My father was sitting near the front turned, stood up and walked out of the service very rudely. That was the extent of the objection. I was sent to a boy public-school and one assumed that all things to with religion involved boys and men. The idea of girls being involved was something one needn't contemplate. I was of that tradition at that stage, not knowing that later on in life I would have two daughters who would become head choristers of St Davids Cathedral Choir and a son who became the head chorister of the boys' choir. That's how one's point of view changed.

But I was actually away at university at the time. I was in Bangor University. I probably went along with that sort of point of view. As for the community in St Davids, I don't believe I belonged to the community as much in those days as I do today. I'm much more part of St Davids community now than I was then. I don't really know what people thought about it in St Davids. I don't think probably many people in St Davids thought very much about it.

2. At the time, did you realise that it was one of the first UK cathedrals to include girl choristers? Was it seen as an historical moment?

I don't think that would have been seen like that at all. Although of course the story did get into the Radio Times because Peter Boorman had a feature on him "7 Years of Famine and 7 More Years of Famine."

Peter made a great virtue of his neglected situation at St Davids. That probably got more UK national publicity than the actual girls going into the choir. When Salisbury Cathedral tried to make out that they'd done a historical thing the people in St Davids sort of sat up and said, wait a minute haven't we done this for the last thirty odd years? There were several letters written to the various national newspapers over the years by various head choristers of St Davids Cathedral choir. I know that Claire Watkins sent a letter which was published in The Times, another one in the Telegraph, I think. There were several letters written by grievous head choristers saying Salisbury was not the first, we were there long before you were. Salisbury Cathedral have got the message and back tracked a little bit, and they now say they're the first to appoint a separate girls' choir and they also say in publicity that they do acknowledge that St Davids was the first to have girls sing in the cathedral. So, I think Salisbury have changed their tune a little bit because they got a lot of criticism over the last decade or so, claiming that they were the first when they certainly weren't.

Another point that has been overlooked is that Peter appointed Rosalyn Charles as the assistant organist and that was a very unusual thing to do, to appoint a female assistant organist. That story got a little bit lost because when my son in law Simon Pearce was appointed assistant organist, he wasn't the first because Rosalyn Charles was all those years back. Benjamin Phillip's story says that it was agreed by the chapter that she should be paid a salary, so she wasn't a volunteer. When Michael Slaney was organist, he never took a penny. My son in law Simon came afterwards and was salaried. He wasn't the first salaried organist at St Davids Cathedral, but it's clear from Benjamin's research, it's in the chapter records that Rosalyn Charles was actually paid and she was a lady and that was very unusual.

I think the strength of a cathedral choir depends on the strength of personality of the person who leads it. That's true of St Davids Cathedral Choir today as it has been always the case. For me, the events surrounding the establishment of the girls at St Davids Cathedral were second hand because I was away and of course I was not strong minded enough to probably challenge my father. I probably sort of went along with it that it was not a very good thing. St Davids Cathedral was always on oddity among cathedrals because it is a parish church as well as a cathedral. That does not apply to a lot of English cathedrals. So, it was a parish, and it wasn't unusual to have girls singing in parish church choirs elsewhere. It was an oddity in that respect. Also, I suppose because it's such a small place the girls who went to sing, often their fathers had been men in the cathedral or choristers themselves who were probably proud their daughters were there. I don't think it was too controversial, but some people would have been shocked. A stiff upper lip in the older generation. St Davids is quite a soft place, it's nice to its own people and it's proud of its own people whether they're a girl or whether they're members of St Davids rugby club. It's all like that, I think.

In my family there was a feeling it was all temporary and one day somebody would come along and reinstate the boys' choir and of course when Kerry Beaumont did that, that would've satisfied my father who'd have thought that's come full circle.

The sad thing is that the boys' choir has collapsed again, and I don't know what will happen after corona virus. There's going to have to be some recruiting in St Davids to get any choristers at all, boys or girls.

Girl always considered singing in a choir a girl thing to do not boys. It's interesting in the adverts which Peter Boorman made where he says, 'to see their sons doing an historic and *masculine* job in providing the music at Wales national cathedral'. There was an awareness there that it shouldn't be seen as a girl thing to do.

Competition for time was always an issue at St Davids. When it came to a school event on a Sunday which clashed with the choir, any organist could say you've got to be there because you're doing a job. A lot of people in St Davids have found that problem over the years. Nicholas just inherited the tradition of girls. He never tried to change it. It was an established thing that St Davids had girls in the choir. It was an anomaly among cathedral choirs. No other cathedral in Britain had girls singing I don't think. It was just one of those things that St Davids had girls and not boys. That's what Peter had done.

He was eccentric to the extent that he'd spend Wednesday night rehearsing an anthem, so everybody knew it and then he'd come along on Sunday morning and say we're not singing that, we're singing something else. Maybe that's the test of a good choir.

Telephone interview with Rosalyn Charles [former Head of Music at Ysgol Dewi Sant, St Davids Secondary School] - Friday, 29th January 2021.

1. What do you remember about the first girl choristers being introduced at St Davids Cathedral?

I have dug out an article which tells you the circumstances. There was a shortage of boy trebles, in fact there were only about ten boy trebles in the choir then. I think at the time, this was about 1966, several of them went down with flu. Peter Boorman, in desperation because they were going to do a live Radio 3 Evensong, a live broadcast which we did quite often. So, in desperation he rang the headmaster David James, very nice man, to see if we could help at the school. He knew I'd formed a choir when I got there. So, we had this sort of SOS, could we help. We turned up down in the cathedral. A lot of them had never sung a church cathedral service before so they had to learn very rapidly because for a live Radio 3 Broadcast you have to be very precise. The slightest movement or cough is not on. That was about the first introduction but there was always problems. You might like to look up the newspaper the South Wales Evening Post dated Monday August 15th, 1966. The heading of this article is, it's a Pembrokeshire viewpoint, 'Girls may solve choir problem at cathedral' and the first sentence is 'girls in a cathedral choir! The purists will undoubtedly shudder at the prospect.' And it goes on and on. You'll be quite interested to read all that.

St Davids has such a small population, so it was very difficult to recruit singers, trebles or otherwise. And of course, in the summer term, you'll find this quite amusing, there was a lot of potato picking going on in the area and so the boys would prefer to go and do a bit of potato picking and get some pocket money and didn't always turn up. In fact, there was one occasion when the cathedral hall was going to be opened. It was just built in those days, and again we had an SOS and the girls had to go down and provide some music there. The Bishop and the Archbishop were there and no choir boys I believe. That article might be interesting for you to read. There's another one here, there's no date on this, but it must be later. Western Telegraph, 'Girls averted a choir crisis' and there are photos there of the boys but not the girls, but I have a file of photographs actually.

The first occasion they had to help out was the Radio 3 Broadcast, so they had to get acquainted with the order of the service, the liturgy and psalm singing which was probably a foreign language to some of them because they had a chapel background. They were very bright girls, mainly fifth to sixth form girls and they'd had some training in the school choir so their voice production suited Peter Boorman. It was a rather nice, pure tone. They were able to blend in with the male altos, tenors and basses. Of course, the girls did not sing the alto line, you still had male altos you see. Their sight-reading ability was good. Now I must be careful not to blow my own trumpet. Their sight-reading ability was good, most of them had instrumental lessons, strings and woodwind so that all helped. That was the first time they came and saved the day. After that of course they became a permanent fixture, and it was arranged with the Dean that they could become part of the choir. I think at the time the only other cathedral that had girl choristers was Derby Cathedral, if I remember correctly. The cathedral library would have a record of every piece of music that was sung and all these broadcasts. We did television programmes as well, several Songs of Praise and special services. There were lots of those of course. One in particular was after the Investiture of the Prince of Wales, Prince Charles. There was a special service the following day in the cathedral. That was very exciting. We sang a few feet away from Prince Charles. I should remember what we sang. I've got photographs of that. In fact I wrote a little article about that in the Carmarthen Christ Church Magazine recently. One of the highlights. Of course, there were so many highlights that we were involved in besides the sort of weekly services and practices of course which were vital.

The dates are a little bit vague here. I'm thinking too of the music society that was formed in the school, so I've got those days imprinted in my mind. The music society Cymdeithas Gerdd Ysgol Dewi Sant was formed in 1966 and our first concert was in the following February where we did Ceremony of Carols with Anne Griffiths. That's the connection with the girls and the cathedral.

After that very first broadcast, Peter often had letters all over the country. People do write in and comment on these broadcasts of choral evensong. He did have one letter from a very eminent choir master, I can't tell you who it was, complimenting him on the quality of the *boys'* voices. That was lovely wasn't it. So, he wasn't able to distinguish between the tone of boy trebles and girl trebles. I don't think Peter enlightened him on that point because he said he was very old and didn't want to upset him. He got lots of appreciative letters as did I after Songs of Praise television things. It was great fun. Singing in a choir is great fun as you know.

The girls really had to sight read at very short notice. They were bright, intelligent girls. I only got there in 1964 and formed the choir and started their regular practices and they were so enthusiastic about music. During the following year and in the 70's we gave regular concerts in the school. They sang in lots of different languages and we did some wonderful repertoire, not school music at all. I've got a long list of stuff we did. We had some very eminent vice presidents of the society. Sir Thomas Armstrong (Principle of the Royal Academy) Earl Baldwin of Budley, Sir Arthur Bliss (Master of the Queen's Music at the time) Glyn Daniel (fellow of St John's College Cambridge) Desmond Donnelly (MP for Pembrokeshire) Glynfor Evans (Plaid MP) Leon Gossons (fabulous oboe player at the time) Anne Griffiths (famous Welsh harpist) who died a few weeks ago at the age of 85. She played many times for us in the cathedral and at school because very often we did a school concert in February and then summer concerts at the cathedral which were formed in 1956. We sang in that series in the summer you see. Alyn Hodinott (Professor at Cardiff) who was my professor, my composition tutor, Ian Parrot (Professor at Aberystwyth) Edmund Rewbrough (fellow of Worcester College Oxford) and he came to St Davids for holidays. Viscount Tenby, David Lloyd George, Mansel Thomas (famous Welsh composer) They were all Vice Presidents. We did some wonderful stuff with girl treble voices, but I also did four-part stuff. It wasn't easy to train teenage boys to sing tenor and bass, but we managed it. They didn't learn as much repertoire as the girls, but we managed to sing some Bach Cantatas. Lots of fabulous stuff.

The music society was called Cymdeithas Gerdd Ysgol Dewi Sant (The Music Society of St Davids School) Sir Geraint Evans the opera singer was the president. In fact, he sent me a telegram before our first concert to wish us luck and I have a little brochure here about it with the school crest in yellow and black. It says the new society was formed in the Autumn of 1966 to widen the scope of school concerts and to increase their value and appeal to performer and listener alike. The general policies to arrange such programmes will afford us singers and players the experience of appearing alongside eminent artists rather than to compete with organisations able to bear the cost of fully professional concerts. Of course, we were doing it on a shoestring. Money came from ticket sales and we had a list of guarantors. That was set up and the first concert was in February 1967 which included Britten's Ceremony of Carols with Ann Griffiths playing. We repeated that in the cathedral in the summer. We did other things with harp as well. Harp and horns. There's lots more to tell you about that society, the same girls were singing in both. That ran from about 1967 until I left in about 1977. It was all very exciting.

We didn't just sing with the piano or organ. We did have an electronic organ in the school actually, the Physics master built it, Rex Lewis. We had instrumentalists because I wanted them to do the performances in the authentic form so for each concert, we would have

instrumentalists, either from Aberystwyth University where they had a very good string quartet or any other instruments that were required so they used to come down and play for us. Or from Cardiff, professional players from South Wales. The girls, tenors and basses got used to playing with small stringed orchestras which is fabulous really. So much more interesting than just singing a work with piano accompaniment when it should be with strings or oboes or whatever. If there was a Bach Cantata, we'd see the instrumentation and I'd book the necessary instruments. That gave them a wonderful background and introduction to choral music. They could sing in several languages; I must tell you. Latin obviously because the repertoire went from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, so they'd sing in Latin. They would sing in German of course, the Bach Cantatas would all be done in the original. We did a French piece once, Debussy Salut Printemps, and Welsh of course. Italian, they did something by Verdi. They did a very interesting piece full of Spanish rhythms by an Austrian composer, not very well known, Paul Csonka. They were Spanish religious pieces so there were Spanish rhythms and Ann Griffiths came to play accompaniment for that. The final thing we did was Noyes Fludde by Benjamin Britten, the medieval morality play, and we did it in costume with actions in the school hall with full orchestra. If you look up the instrumentation of that, that would be interesting for you. It needed a piano and an organ, a group of recorders, I got those from somewhere near Pembrey (there was a lady there who had a recorder group) strings of course and it also called for tubular bells. Schools don't tend to have that sort of things lying about. Another very amusing story; I thought now where is the nearest set of tubular bells? It would have to be a university. They had them in Aberystwyth so I asked if we could borrow them for Noyes Fludde. The answer was yes (somebody had to learn to play them and learn the part) and I remember a crazy journey up to Aberystwyth after school in a minibus to fetch the tubular bells for Noyes Fludde. It was great fun. Lovely colour photographs of those too.

2. What was the response in the city to the girls singing in the choir?

Great relief obviously because crisis was averted, and the service went ahead. I don't think there was terrible criticism, although as you see from this article it says 'purists will undoubtedly shudder at the prospect. Influenced by centuries of tradition they will probably say there is no possible substitute for the pure strong voices of boy trebles.' But necessity was the mother of invention you see so they stepped in. As I said the tone was good enough. The organist who wrote the complementary letter hadn't realised they were girls. There wasn't any sort of adverse reaction locally I don't think. Not to my knowledge anyway. Of course, it's quite common now to have girl trebles.

3. Were the girl choristers accepted when they were initially introduced?

Yes, very well, they were. Yes certainly. The boy trebles didn't seem to mind their presence. Of course, the men were quite happy. They sort of fitted in very well with terrific support from the Dean Edward Jenkins who was a lovely man.

4. At the time did you realise it was one of the first UK cathedrals to include girl choristers?

Yes, I think Peter was fully aware of that.

5. Was it seen as an historical moment?

Yes, I think it was.

6. I believe you were the first female assistant organist to be appointed at St Davids Cathedral. Was that seen as an historical moment?

I believe so yes. It was a great honour. It's a great honour now to be asked by you to reminisce about the good old days. It was wonderful. I had a chapel background. I used to go to Raoboth where my family were, and I came back to the area. I'd been in Cardiff for three years and then I went to London to do my teacher training at the Institute of Education, and I stayed on in London to teach for a year. Then the St Davids post came vacant and I applied for that. I came back to the area, but I was still going to Raoboth to the services but because of all the musical life of the school and this occasion where we had to help out, I was spending so much time in the cathedral and so I took up organ playing. I hadn't been an organist up to then, I'd been doing piano, harp and singing. So, I thought while I'm teaching at St Davids, I'll do something different for myself, so I learnt to play the organ. Because of the involvement and the time, I reluctantly joined the Church in Wales. This was probably a terrible thing to do in chapel circles, but it was all circumstance. It all followed on from all the singing activities and the organ playing. Then I was made the sub-organist. In fact, in the last two years I was the acting organist because I believe Peter left in about 1976 and I left in 1978. I was made sub-organist in 1966. It was a wonderful time and I've got a lifetime of memories and I've kept all the concert programmes which is rather nice, and all the repertoire and I've kept most of the scores. I had a look and I've got a tremendous amount of music books and I've kept all these interesting pieces of music that we did. It was a wonderful time, musically speaking.

7. Are there any individuals you believe would be suitable for me to get in touch with for more information on this topic?

The link between the school and the cathedral and the music society is very important. Sad to say that most of the people I've mentioned are no longer with us you see. Peter is no longer here, the headmaster, the Dean, the Canons they change of course. The choir members I'm afraid many of those are no longer with us. Malcolm Grey was in the cathedral choir. You see when I went there, I was about 22 years of age because I went to university early. I went when I was 17 to Cardiff having started school at 4 so had to start work a year early. So, you can work out my age you see, and a lot of the men would have been older than me at the time so I can't really think of many you could contact. Arnold Boorman, Peter's youngest son, lives in Solva. One thing I forgot to mention was that they did make a film way back in the 70's called Organ Organ. I believe that Arnold was playing the violin. He was a very young boy then. His brother Adrian, who is 15 years older than Arnold, he lives in Norfolk so he would know an awful lot about the cathedral. There was a very big age gap between them. If I think of somebody, I can let you know.

1. What do you remember about the first girl choristers being introduced at St Davids Cathedral?

I don't actually remember a lot. I was very young. When they did the first broadcast which was in 1966, I'd only been in the choir about six months. I joined when I was 5 which is very very young. So, I was used to the boys and we used to take the piano around to St Nicholas's Chapel and then suddenly for the broadcast, I wasn't involved in that. I wouldn't have been involved in that anyway because I was so young and then suddenly in the September, there were the girls. They were much older. First year, second year of sixth form. Seventeen, eighteen years of age so they were much bigger than me. I knew nothing. They were all my sister's age. One of the things I do remember is that I was given a separate stall because the men were at the back of the choir stalls and the girls were at the front. I was given a separate stall alongside, so I was still a treble, but I was alongside. It was because there wasn't any room. In the broadcast I think they had six or eight girls, but when they came to join the choir permanently in September there were a lot more of them. I don't remember exactly, but they might have gone down to the sort of O-level year, which is fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, so I'm certain there were at least twelve girls. Those choir stalls only take six or seven max. There just wasn't room for me. It used to be that the boys would sit in front of the choir stalls.

When Kerry Beaumont re-introduced the new boys' choir and then Geraint Bowen, with Tim and with Daniel Cook, they all had the boys in the front.

There is one other piece of history that you've got. There's only one person who sang with the last boys' choir and the first new boys' choir and that's me. The girls were used in the broadcast in 1966 because there was a lot of flu around. I know why I wasn't there because I was off school, I had measles, German measles and mumps at the same time, so I was off school. That's why I wasn't singing in it. I knew nothing about it. I think the measles hit the primary school and that's where most of the boys were coming from. That's why they couldn't come. My brother was home from Carmarthen where he was studying, and he and the old man had a discussion about what was going to happen because Adrian was 20/21 by that point. He said well why don't you ask the Dean if we could use the girls from the school? Rosalyn Charles was already the assistant organist, and she was head of music at the school. Dad was a peripatetic teacher at the school and knew most of the girls anyway.

Rosalyn had only been there eighteen months/ two years. Dad knew how good the musicianship was of the girls that he was anticipating of asking. He was worried about asking the Dean whose permission had to be granted because it was so off the wall. It had just never been done and he was really worried. So, Adrian and Dad had this conversation and Adrian said look, you're not going to know if you don't ask. So, the old man phoned the Dean and said I've got a problem, can I come and see you. He went to see him. They sat down and discussed it for about half an hour and Dean Jenkins said yeah, let's go for it. We've got to do something so let's go for it. That's what they did. For the next ten days the girls in school learned how to sing the music. They learned how to sing psalms which is a really complicated thing if you've never done it before. It's really difficult. Dad was prone to panicking so that's not surprising. They also learnt I think it was Ireland in F. They learnt from scratch Beata Quorum Vir by Stanford. But they were all A level students, so they were all good musicians. That's the thing to remember about it is that they were all good musicians. That's basically what happened. They went ahead and did it. There was one letter which said, 'the quality of your *boys*' voices was incredible'. I've got a feeling it was Dr Sir Francis Jackson. Dad didn't tell any of his colleagues at the time in the College of Organists. He told nobody. He knew it was so off the wall and if it went wrong, he knew he was going

to be pilloried. Kicked out. So, he didn't tell anybody. Francis Jackson and all these people just didn't know, and they were fooled. The one criterion that there's always been and there's only one that has ever broken that is that there should be no vibrato. No vibrato at all. If you put vibrato into it, it's a woman's voice not a girl's voice.

When Malcolm Watts finished, Dad took over as the interregnum and Kerry came in in about 1990. It was about a year later that the boys were ready to sing their first service and the men were asked to sing along. To go along as back up basically and I went along. Mike Slaney was playing the organ and Kerry was conducting and just before the service I said to the boys, this is a really unique occasion because I was the only male to have done both services. I think I was the only person to do both services.

It was a mixed choir strictly speaking. I was there on my own for a couple or three years. Then Paul Raymond joined the choir until his voice broke for a couple of years which was around 1969 or 1970. Then Arwel Davies came in when he moved to St Davids which was around 1971 or 1972. Then later on, I think Neil Richardson was the boy chorister for a while, John Price from Voyages of Discovery, he was in the choir for a little while. As was Phillip Raymond. I think there were no boys for quite a while. They were the only boy choristers to sing alongside the girls. Mixed (if you can call it that with one or two boys) we were there primarily as acolytes. That was our main function, but we also sang as well. Most of those who sang went on to go into the back row as well. Sooner rather than later. Especially Neil because his voice dropped when he was quite young, and he was a bass straight away. My voice was quite late breaking, but I was singing alto a long time before that. Arwel was also singing alto. Kerry Beaumont re-introduced the boys as a completely separate choir. Kerry also set up the adult choir which was for the girls who had previously sung in the choir. As soon as they got to 18 or left school, they were required to leave the choir. The girls would then have nothing to do, and it was very frustrating. Back in the 80s Arwel started a choir called Cantorion Tyddewi. That was because there were a number of ladies around who had sung and had got nothing to do and again there were men around with nothing to do but also didn't want to make a full commitment.

2. What was the response in the city? Were the girl choristers accepted when they were initially introduced?

I don't really know but having spoken to a few people there was a very positive response. I can tie this in with the third question which is, were the girl choristers accepted when they were initially introduced because the men of the choir were actually quite an influential group in their own little way. You had Major Howells who was a former Salisbury chorister, and he came to St Davids singing alto. John Smith is Jane James' father; he was a big noise in St Davids. There was Willy Morris who was on the lifeboat crew. Dean Jenkins was also a tenor as well as being the Dean of St Davids. Most of the minor canons who came in were singers. So, you get this input from the cathedral going into the village. So yes, they were. Dean Jenkins was in favour of it to start with as a one-off basis. Having heard the quality of what they were getting, I believe there was a meeting, and it was decided that it would be a good idea to actually take this further and try it more. Boys, especially those days in the 60s, from about nine/ten onwards in the summer were expected to go out in the fields to pick potatoes and were out on the hay and so on and so forth. It was just a part of life in St Davids. That generally went out in the 70s but the girls, they tended to be more occupied in the summer working in the cafés and things like that so there was a better regularity for the girls to be there than there was for the boys. So, they were welcomed with open arms. Bit of trepidation at first but welcomed with open arms. The quality of the services went up straight away. The quality of the singing went up straight away. They were that much older and had much more musical experience and so on and so forth. When Dad got to St Davids in 1954 all they did

was hymn singing. They were poor parish choir. If you've ever had the misfortune of coming across a piece called Soar in F, a communion piece, it is dreadful. When Tim Noon was there, we brought it out for a practice to see what it was like and it went back in the box. We learnt it in about 10 minutes, did one service with it and put it back in the box. The boys had been brought up to sing psalms. They were doing a few of the services both matins and evensongs but at that time they were only singing two, possibly three services a week. It was rarely that they did three services a week. It was mainly two on a Sunday, matins and evensong. Sometimes in the week they would do an evensong. When the girls arrived, it was quickly decided that they would have a mid-week evensong every week which was 4:30 on a Wednesday. That's the way things went. A couple of years later it went to the girls singing on their own on a Wednesday and then on a Thursday we'd have full choir with the men as well. The response in the city was actually very positive and it was certainly positive from the men who were in the choir at the same time. Initially they wore school uniform, but it was quickly decided that it would be better if they wore academic robes. I think the girls had burgundy gowns straight away. Salisbury aren't a royal foundation so they can't wear red. When the organists used to come down in the summer for recitals, they would sometimes arrive a few days early and leave a few days late so they could meet the next one coming in for a concert. I've gone to sleep several times with jazz playing in the music room. The old man was a double bassist by trade. That was his first instrument, and he played a mean double bass. You have people turning up playing all different instruments. You just have all this jazz going on. The only instruments Dad couldn't play were the bag pipes and the drums. He taught everything but the harp. Rosalyn is a very good harpist. Dad used to play with the London Philharmonic which is how he made his money. He was a clerk for MOD for many years and he was taking music lessons with people like John Ireland down in London because John Ireland was the organist of St Pauls at the time. I can't remember who was at Westminster, but he also had lessons with them on alternate Saturday's. In the week he'd travel down to London in the evenings because he only lived an hour away, so he'd drive down to play concerts. He was a multi-talented musician. Harry Gab and George Guest, they both heard about the opening in St Davids and had both known Dad in the army and knew how good an organist he was. They heard about the job and said you've got to go for this. This is your opportunity. They knew he was a very good choir trainer from very early on. He was a phenomenal musician and passed his FRCO first time and he was asked to be a fellow of the Royal College of Music as well because he was such a good musician. Although, to be quite frank with you, he couldn't sing a note if you carried it in a bucket. He could not sing to save his life and yet he could train people. He could whistle any tune you wanted, and he had perfect pitch, but he just couldn't carry a note. He could tell if you were an eighth of a tone flat or even less.

3. As a boy chorister what was it like to sing with the girls?

It was phenomenal. Absolutely phenomenal. Because I was so young, I was still learning to read, and I was still learning to read music. I learnt to read music at the same time that I learnt to read. I never have had the technical expertise of music because both the reading of music and understanding of it became intuition. I can hear what's going on, but I can't tell you what key it's in. It was such a natural way to learn. When we were singing psalms there would be words that I just did not know. The girl who was stood next to me, for a long time it was Mary Llywelyn and later on it was Gill Thomas and then Jackie Price for a while, they taught me how to read. If they didn't know a word, they'd always ask somebody else because there are difficult words in there. They would ask and then they would explain it to me, so my reading level was far in excess of what everyone else was at my age. When you read to learn Latin, you learn to read Greek and French and German and Russian and things like that,

it makes life much more interesting later on. It was phenomenal from that point of view. It was quite intimidating as well especially with all these big girls, especially seniors in high school when you're just a junior in infant school. It's just phenomenal. It was many years later that I realised.

I hated school. Nobody found out until years later that I actually have a semi-photographic memory. One of the reasons I hated school was the homework. I have to make a mark on a page, and I used to be able to pull it back. That was very useful when I was in the army because when you're dealing with top-secret documents you can't take them out of the secret room. But, if you can remember the information you don't need to take it out the room anyway. It was only two or three years into my army career that somebody noticed that I was pulling up information that was in the books. How do you know that? Well, it's on page 31. Because of that, I hated homework because I'd already learnt it, I already knew the answer. But nobody at school picked it up which was really frustrating. My education was messy to put it bluntly. Learning from the girls was fantastic, singing with the girls was fantastic, it gave me a lot of confidence later on in life.

I know there was a lot of talk late 60s/70s of starting a choir school with the view of getting the girls trained because they were having to do all their academic work and the choir work as well. There was a lot of talk about a choir school. The opportunity arose in the mid-80s when money was available, and Malcolm Watts turned it down. It would have meant that the girls and boys as well for that matter would have had an opportunity to do so much more. Back in the 60s very few people had time, certainly around here. Now days it's not so bad because people are willing to travel from Haverfordwest for a service. It's so much easier because it's only twenty minutes away. In those days it was an hour plus by bus and the busses didn't run on Sunday. There were major problems because you only had St Davids and possibly Solva to choose from, that's all you had.

4. Was it seen as an historical moment?

No, I didn't realise it at the time. I definitely didn't realise it at the time because I was too young to realise it. But when I went away and as I say I joined the army, I went to Catterick to do my basic training. I thought I'd go along to the church and see if they wanted some singers, and I went along. They asked where I had sung, and I said all my childhood I've been singing in St Davids Cathedral Choir and they replied 'What?! That's got the girls' choir!' It was still a front-line choir because it wasn't until the 90s that Salisbury introduced the girls. The men who sung in the cathedral choir knew about it and most of them were officers. They all knew about St Davids. So that was quite cool, it was something I got a lot of kudos off.. At the time I didn't realise it, but later on I found out. When you're in the locality and there's no outside input, you really don't understand what you're involved in and then later on, it became very clear. I'm very proud to have been there.

Salisbury Cathedral being the first in the 90s - In English cathedrals, yes. But St Mary's Edinburgh had girls in their choir, and I think they started (I don't know the actual date) sometime around the early 80s. So that's Church of Scotland. Church of England Salisbury. Church of Wales 1966 St Davids. And I don't know about America because the American Church has always been very forward thinking. And it could very well be that you'll find that somewhere like Atlanta or somewhere like that has had a girls' choir for a while. I don't think Washington have because Vernon School in Washington is where they get their boys from but there's a girls' school that's been associated with it which has been there for quite a number of years. That might be worth looking up. I wrote a letter to the Daily Telegraph about this in the mid-2000s. I can't tell you any more than that. The old man used to regularly write to The Times in response to letters and they wrote a lovely obituary about him as well.

5. Are there any individuals that you believe would be suitable for me to contact to get more information about this?

I remembered the names of some of the girls. I've spoken to my brother about this as well. He sang in the broadcast. He's the only back row member still alive. These are the names that we've come up with. I don't know her married name but Caroline Sage. The next is Ann Llywelyn who became Ann Shuttleworth. The next one is Andrea Taylor, Chris Taylor's sister-in-law. She was one of the leaders of the group. The other Dorothy Panton, Dorothy Evans her maiden name was. Adrian and I are both pretty sure she was singing in the choir at the time.

1. What do you remember about the first girl choristers being introduced at St Davids Cathedral?

At that time, I was working in Bradford, but I'd come home before Easter to help out in the choir which I always did but also when I got home, I got a rather nasty chest infection, so I hadn't gone back to Bradford after Easter. In fact, the doctor signed me off for a fortnight. So, it was quite convenient that we had this broadcast coming up on the 20th. Before the weekend, we used to have a choir practice on a Thursday night so it might have been then. We were down to two boys because there was a huge flu thing going around the village and of course there aren't many people in St Davids anyway, so not many boys. Things were getting a bit panicked. Rosalyn was helping out the two boys that were there because she had a beautiful singing voice as well, but it wasn't working. Then, on the Monday when we had a practice there were no boys at all. So, father was being a typical musician, threw up his hands and said he wasn't sure what to do. He went home to the canonry where we lived, and he sat at the kitchen table with his head in his hands crying his eyes out. I asked what was wrong and he said there was no treble line and that the broadcast couldn't be cancelled because everything was being set up. In those days, you had to book the telephone line to Cardiff from St Davids because everything went by telephone line. We were antiquated by then. Meanwhile, I had been to Ysgol Dewi Sant, as did everybody, and just before I left in 1963 Rosalyn had come, and she had built up a very good choir in Ysgol Dewi Sant. Then she built up this girls' choir and they were very very good. Also, she'd been working with father in the cathedral, and he'd taught her how to play the organ.

Father was crying his eyes out; I was tearing my hair out and so it was suggested by the family, well why don't you ask Rosalyn if the girls from the school could help out? Girls hadn't been used in the choir prior to the broadcast. Father replied saying the cathedral would never have it and we replied by saying, have you asked them? Father said that it wasn't tradition and thought the cathedral would never have it. Father went off to the Deanery to see Dean Jenkins and explained the situation. He asked if the Dean and Chapter would mind very much if we got the girls to come down from the school to sing with the choir for the broadcast. The Dean replied saying certainly, no problem at all. The next problem was to ask the headmaster David James. He agreed wholeheartedly and they were given the afternoon off school to do it. So, Rosalyn took her girls down to the cathedral. We practiced and practiced and then the broadcast came, and the girls sang. After that of course, it was so successful because these girls were very proficient. Rosalyn had taught these girls music you see, and they weren't like teaching nine- or ten-year-old boys. These were mature young ladies who had been through musical education. It was suggested that they could be used until they could get more boys back into the choir and the Dean agreed, sharing the decision with the Chapter. About a month or so later when I came back from Bradford at the end of May the girls were singing the services. The girls used to sing both services on a Sunday. They would sing the Welsh service and then come onto the main cathedral service. Most of the girls weren't Welsh speaking but could read and write Welsh, so that was very good. Initially, before the girls got themselves established, Rosalyn would sing with the girls to help them along the way until they got used to it.

But there were conditions. The conditions were that firstly, they had gowns ordered for them, like undergraduate gowns but in red. But they weren't to wear surplices. Also, if they left school then they left the choir. It was a condition that when they were in the cathedral choir, once they left Ysgol Dewi Sant, they also left the choir. David James, who was the headmaster, agreed with all this. They had permission to be out of school whenever they were

required in the cathedral. Also, this is something musical if they developed a vibrato they must leave. Their sound must be the same as if it were a traditional choir.

It was a family decision and a wonderful memory. Of course, later on, other cathedrals started using girls and I think Derby was next. It wasn't recognised in St Davids because it wasn't Church of England, it was Church in Wales.

2. What was the response like in the city?

That's quite a difficult question. I think mainly people were proud of them. There were some smashing girls in the choir, there really were. The congregation of the cathedral were very receptive. The gentlemen of the choir were very receptive. It gave the gentlemen of the choir an incentive because we'd been struggling for quite some time with poor numbers of boys and not very good boys. It gave the choir a little bit of impetus and having a good treble line sorted it all out. Everyone thought the singing was beautiful. It was just accepted, and people moved on. The men of the choir they were so pleased. It had taken father ten years to get the choir from singing hymns to singing complicated music. It had all been let down without a treble line. The girls pulled it back. Afterwards, the cathedral choir was pretty good. We were pleased to have the girls sing with us.

3. As a singer in the back row, what was it like to sing with the girl choristers?

No problem at all. Just the same as singing with a load of boys. I sang alto, I was a counter tenor. It was nice to have a treble part above you because as an alto, sometimes you feel the need for someone above you and if it wasn't there it was very difficult if you see what I mean. There was also another quite well-known alto in the choir called Major Bernard Howells. He'd retired to St Davids. He was in the army in Burma. When he left the army, he became a school master at Salisbury Cathedral School and then he became a senior master at Llandaff Cathedral School and then retired to St Davids. He was very impressed by the girls and thought they were very good. We were more than happy to sing with the girls.

4. What do you believe the reasons were behind the shortage of boy choristers available in St Davids?

The population in St Davids at the time was around 1500 and there was a whole cohort of boys that went through. Then, there weren't any boys being produced in St Davids if you know what I mean. The population of St Davids weren't producing boys. All of a sudden there were hardly any boys around the place. If you look at pictures of Arnold's year at the voluntary school, there's lots of girls but hardly any boys. I suppose I would be proved wrong with the census results but there were no boys available to come forward and sing in the choir. It was just dying out. When we first moved to St Davids there were twelve or fourteen boys in the choir. Then you got down to about four. There was a lack of boys. I don't know if it's genetics or whatever it is but there was something at that time. In the 60s boys' voices started breaking earlier than they had been. When we moved to St Davids a lot of the boys were fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, going on singing treble. I don't know what it was, but the age of maturity was dropping, and the voices were breaking earlier than they used to. We just couldn't get boy trebles.

5. At the time, did you realise it was one of the first UK cathedrals to include girl choristers?

No. We just got on with it. I think it was pointed out fairly shortly afterwards, but it wasn't a conscious decision. It was more of a case of rescuing a choral evensong. The other thing was a lot of the girls weren't originally Anglican. Quite a number of the girls came from a chapel

background, but they still came and sang in the choir. They were there to sing rather than to be religious. A number of them including Rosalyn were confirmed a year or so later.

6. Was it seen as an historical moment?

Not really. It was just a case of necessity is the mother of invention. What is nice I think now is the fact that that link that we formed in 1966 with David James and Ysgol Dewi Sant and the cathedral was built upon. It's been built upon ever since. Even today when the council wanted to close Ysgol Dewi Sant it was because of the strong link between the school and cathedral that inspired the situation as it is today. [Ysgol Dewi Sant is now a Church in Wales school re-named Ysgol Penrhyn Dewi] It is partly a product of the girls being introduced that you've got the musical link between the cathedral and Ysgol Dewi Sant which is part of the church foundation now. It is a legacy, it really is. I look back and I'm quite proud of that because that is something that was built up by father and Rosalyn and it's still carrying on today.

7. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

When we moved to St Davids, they didn't have a very big musical tradition. A lot of the men in the choir couldn't read music because they were brought up with tonic sol-fa. If you go into some of the music in the cathedral music library, you'll find father had gone through and written the tonic sol-fa above the words. Dean Jenkins couldn't read normal notation and he had to read tonic sol-fa. In 1957/58 we took the choir to the Albert Hall to the St Davids Day Festival. We sang 'O Thou the Central Orb' by Charles Wood and some of the men had to have it in tonic sol-fa in order to be able to sing it. The choir was very much a non-conformist background. When I joined, a lot of people in the choir weren't from a cathedral background, they just enjoyed singing. Father decided to start the Tomkins Festival and he got his friends to come down and stay in St Davids and they used to play in the canonry. Some of the recitals were world class. Later on, it all goes into the St Davids Festival. There was hardly any musical tradition at first. A lot of hard work went into it including the printing. Father decided that they would have a weekly printed music sheet like they still do. He used to catch the bus into town, because we didn't have a car, to the printer in Key Street and they used to print it and sent it back on the bus. Unfortunately, the owner of the printers passed away so father decided to print them himself and so we bought a printing press. He printed all the service booklets and everything.

Telephone interview with Sarah MacDonald [Musical Director of Ely Cathedral's Girls' Choir] - Thursday, 21st January 2021.

1. Do you enjoy working with girl choristers?

Yes absolutely. I enjoy working with boy choristers as well. I suppose the fact that I am female may mean I relate slightly better to the girls, I don't know.

2. What are the differences between working with a boy and girl treble line?

I think primarily social rather than vocal. Obviously, you need to define treble line which is the most important thing. You can't talk about a seventeen-year-old girl in the same breath as you talk about a nine-year-old boy because they're very different beasts. So, I would say basically, if you're talking about two groups of children who are the same age, you'll get a very different vocal development because, this is a paper that I have not written yet, but it's a paper about when children develop their singing voices. There's anecdotal evidence that shows that boys tend to develop it a bit earlier. They get access to their voice rather than their little five-year-old shouty children's voice, they get access to their head voice a little earlier. Crucially it means that it also works out on the other end which means that boys voices change earlier than girls' voices change. Girls' voices change around year ten or eleven depending on vocal training or physiology, but the instrument changes from a treble voice to a young soprano. Whereas boys, that was the case before the 1950s, but they think that the introduction of protein into the diet is why boys voices are changing earlier now. They tend to change around eleven or twelve or thirteen. But the problem is that because girls on the whole tend to be so much more mature. The girls will be behind vocally but ahead socially. That makes it difficult. You have to have that clear in your mind before you say what the differences are. Obviously, my girls at Ely are age ten to sixteen. They are exactly the right age vocally to match up with a group of eight- to twelve-year-old boys. But the differences in social and emotional development is even bigger. But if you're talking generally about kids who are roughly the same age, vocal things aside, I would say still that the emotional and social thing is still the big difference. I think boys have a tendency to hunt in packs and there's a real team spirit about them. Girls on the other hand, if you don't keep them diffuse, they get a bit insular and as I'm sure you know from having been a teenage girl once yourself, they can be utterly foul to each other. Girls can spend weeks inflicting psychological torture on each other. That's the difference in their behaviour. Difference also I think in general, girls tend to be quicker to want to please and please adults. That's something from Martin Ashley's *How High do Boys Sing?* where he thinks that there is a difference in the way children want to please. Girls are keen to please the adults whereas the boys want to please each other and to impress each other.

3. According to the Times there are now 739 girl choristers and 737 boy choristers in English Cathedrals. Why is it do you think that girl choristers are beginning to overtake boy choristers in terms of numbers?

I would say that they are not just beginning but have well and truly overtaken. That is a Choir Schools Association statistic from last year and that means that every school in the country that is associated with the Choir School Association is giving numbers. That doesn't only include cathedrals. That includes Kings, John's, New College, Magdalen, Christ Church, Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral, St George's Windsor and the Chapels Royal. That's ten schools that admit boys only to their choirs and the girls' numbers are still higher. To add to why they've overtaken them, it's partly to do with the arts being seen as a girly thing to do which is unfortunate. You can see it in the example of when young Prince George

started ballet lessons. The Royal Family got trolled because he should be playing rugby. It's an ironic leftover of pre-war stuff. It feels so unreconstructed, but it's there.

4. Were you a girl chorister?

I'm far too old to have been allowed to be a girl chorister. Even in Canada I was not allowed to sing in a cathedral choir.

5. I have read that you were the first female musical director at Selwyn College, Cambridge. Was this seen as an historical moment?

I was the first in any Oxbridge Chapel, so all of Cambridge and all of Oxford, I was the first woman. That was 1999, long before the invention of social media or anything. Choir and Organ did a little feature about it, but nobody made a big deal because there wasn't really a way to make a big deal about things back then in the way that there is now. I think for me, because I'm Canadian that is more different to my colleagues than the fact that I'm female. If you have to use that word, my "otherness" is the fact that I'm a migrant worker, a foreigner and they don't know how to pigeonhole. You can't say what kind of school I went to or how much money my father makes judging by my accent which is a very English thing to do. The way you speak automatically puts you into a pigeonhole. You must have gone to this kind of school and your parents made this amount of money or whatever. You can't do that with a foreign accent. The other thing is that I'd been a student and had been supervised by a number of my colleagues as a student, so I already knew them. I think that probably aided things a little bit in terms of the dynamic in meetings and stuff.

6. Do you believe you are treated any differently because you are a female musical director?

That's a good question. I think there are a couple of answers. First of all, I have been around for a very long time. I am now the second most senior director of music in Cambridge. So, all of the rest of them will come to me to ask questions because it's been thirty years since I've been an undergraduate and nearly twenty-five years at Selwyn. I've got this long view of how things operate. From that point of view, just sticking around means one gets respect. But then there are also questions about the glass ceiling or the glass fanvaulting if you like. I've been shortlisted for a couple of cathedral number one jobs. I don't know whether I didn't get them because I wasn't the right person or because people think I have achieved all I'm capable of which is that I can run a girls' choir, but I can't run a cathedral music department. There are other women who are getting those jobs so maybe that's not true, but there might well be elderly male clergy who might think that. No one ever would dare to say that to me. I'm at Selwyn which is an impoverished college on the wrong side of the river with a significant choral tradition going back much longer than I've been there, but it's not Trinity. It's that whole thing about women in those leadership roles. They get the nurturing jobs. So, the orchestral conductors don't get the evening Brahms series, they get the afternoon school concerts. I don't know. I sometimes think that and sometimes I think well actually, I've been very fortunate and if indeed that is as far as I've got then that's a hell of a lot further than my predecessors and hopefully it will allow my successors to get further. Sometimes I think well actually, maybe I ended up in exactly the right place and this is what I should be doing, and I shouldn't be unsatisfied with it.

7. What do you believe to be the reason behind some establishments still prohibiting girl choristers?

Well, that is exactly what my student in Cambridge is writing her first-year dissertation about. All those really prestigious and elite choirs that are all Royal peculiars as it were, so

Kings, Oxbridge Chapels, St George's Windsor and Westminster Cathedrals, they're really high profile and get used for national events like Royal weddings and Christmas. The other place where you'd find something that is right at the top and is completely limited in terms of gender, is things like Savile Row tailors and Michelin Star chefs. And the joke was that the only thing that men can actually do better than women is cook and sew. If you look at the number of Michelin Star chefs that you have in the country, it's about five women and then there are hundreds that are men. It is just extraordinary. It's the same as the elite choirs. There was a story on the BBC website shortly before Christmas about a female tailor on Savile Row who opened a shop just before March (so bad timing) but the whole point was to make couture clothing for women sewn by a top tailor who was also a woman. Otherwise, everyone else on Savile Row, that is a name that says this is a place where you can buy the best clothes in the world, they're all men. I don't know why. I think the thing about some of those places is that they get away with it because they're peculiars. The thing about Kings or Westminster Abbey is that they don't have a diocese to represent and to serve in the way that a cathedral has. That doesn't excuse St Pauls, Hereford and Chichester which are the last three cathedrals that don't have any girl choristers. The thing about the peculiars is that you could argue that they're museum pieces. Westminster Abbey is preserving a particular museum piece, whereas at Ely Cathedral there are girls and women in the diocese. They are in the cathedral parish and in the congregation and the fact that they weren't represented up at the East end was problematic which was one of the reasons why it changed. A cathedral has a mission and a responsibility to both represent and serve and allow the opportunities to all of its constituents to be involved. Whereas that's not really the case at Kings Cambridge or St George's Windsor because they don't really have a congregation. I don't think that's necessarily a good reason, but I think that is one of the reasons.

8. What is being done at Ely Cathedral to ensure that girl choristers are seen as equal to boys?

We are working towards making sure that the girls feel as valued as the boys do. It has taken a change in director of music and a change of leadership at the school for that to happen. It is interesting because the girls' choir is paid for by the school. It's because the cathedral wanted to have a girls' choir, but they couldn't afford it whereas the school could. The girls for many years have felt unrecognised. Enya's PhD deals with this a lot. There are various things about dress. The girls don't think about the money. If you asked the older ones, they may say that the boys get more off their fees but then they sing more frequently so at the moment you can justify that. But your average ten-year-old girl doesn't think about money. When I first went to Ely whenever we did a concert for example with all the choirs it would say "Ely Cathedral Choir and Ely Cathedral Girls' Choir" which automatically says that the girls' choir is not the Ely Cathedral Choir. The then Chapter assumed we wanted this. The girls always noticed that, and I managed to get that changed by explaining. One of the elderly gentleman chapter members, he is utterly lovely, had no idea that that wasn't us being singled out. What that actually was was us being excluded and he was horrified when I explained. That sort of thing has changed gradually. The more gradual these changes are, the less painful they are for people experiencing them.

The boys at Ely sing six services a week whereas the girls only sing two, but we hardly ever have a normal week. It's usually more like five and three or four and four. Of course, St Davids is absolutely the opposite of pretty much every other cathedral. Everyone knows it's one of the most beautiful cathedrals in the country but it's in Wales and so it is in the corner out the way. It's not like Winchester or something and so people think that what goes on there isn't quite as important and that's why it doesn't get written about.

9. What do you think the future holds for the cathedral chorister tradition?

That's a difficult one. One of the things I think is important is this business about not overdoing the duties for children. You do not send your kid to boarding school and say see you at Christmas. Boarding is becoming non-compulsory in many places because it's just not a lifestyle choice that people are making these days even if they can afford it. There is a lot of focus on well-being, mental health issues and stress overload. Kids have public exams in year seven and eight so even in junior school there's this pressure from the outside which means that working children like it's the industrial revolution is not appropriate. I also am concerned that the vast majority of cathedral choristerships are only available to people who can afford to pay for it. There are some cathedrals and choir schools who will offer 100% funding based on need including Kings and St Johns here at Cambridge. There are a lot of bright kids out there who wouldn't even know to ask for that. They wouldn't even go looking for it because they'd see private school and think oh, forget it.

Except for a few places, it's a pretty non-diverse activity. Bradford is probably the most diverse cathedral in the country but it's not a choir school. They don't sing particularly often. It's well-meaning but it's not particularly high performing. The one place I think that's got it right is Peterborough, but the cathedral's King School is a state school and it's a really high performing school, selective, which means that if you get into the choir, you automatically get a place in the school. They use the choir as a recruitment for the school, the recruitment drive is not such an issue. It's obviously an incredibly diverse city. Last year they had a Muslim boy and a Jewish boy in the boys' choir because that meant that they got into the school. Pictures of their choir are delightfully diverse rather than this string of cute white kids. That's the exception rather than the rule. Also, the cathedral has major financial issues. They really struggle to get a back row so there's all kinds of other things that are not good. It's precarious I would say. It's been interesting though. The Cathedral Music Trust since the pandemic has raised several million pounds to help support. They paid the salaries of Lay Clerks across the country from September, over Christmas, for any cathedrals who could not afford it. It was amazing. That's worth looking up. It started with Ralph Alwood's celebrity big Evensong where Stephen Fry was reading a lesson and they joined up with Friends of Cathedral Music. One of my former girl chorister parents was looking at becoming a trustee. It's obviously starting to get established.

There is a convenience about choir schools, especially if they're boarders because they're on hand. They don't have to fight the traffic to get to choir practice at 8am. If you want to take them out of the lesson to sing for a funeral or do a photoshoot then you only have to ask one person. Whereas, if you have kids at sixteen different schools it's actually really awkward to do things in the day.

Choristers at Ely get fee reduction for being a chorister. The boys at Kings Ely get 50% off their fees. That still means that there's 50% of the fees that parents still have to find or there are means testing available up to 100%. That is also relatively recent. There is a benefit to being a chorister. But to some parents, it wouldn't even occur to them to send their children to private school regardless. It's a tick in the wrong box if you want to go to a Russell Group University these days.

Interview via email with Dr Dean Sarah Rowland Jones [Dean of St Davids Cathedral] -
Thursday, 18th March 2021.

1. How important is the choir to the life of the Cathedral?

Daily worship is fundamental to the life of the Cathedral. The presence of a choir enhances this, in particular through its capacity to draw in others to share in worship – whether that’s the Sunday morning choral eucharist, or choral evensong on Sundays and several days through the week, or particular additional contributions around specific festivals in the Church’s year.

2. What do the girls’ choir contribute to worship at St Davids Cathedral?

The girls’ choir contributes a persistently reliable ‘top line’ to the choir in the majority of choral services, with generally a good number of girls participating. In my view, in recent years they have been the equal of the best of English Cathedral choirs.

While it is fine for a minority of choral services to be sung without a top line, much of the best and widest range of Cathedral music, and the capacity to choose what is most appropriate to the occasion, would be severely curtailed without the girls’ choir.

Some girls go on to study music at higher level and may thus be prepared for contributing to leading worship here or elsewhere in future years.

3. What do the boys choir contribute to worship at St Davids Cathedral?

It has often proved harder to maintain a boys’ choir of good numbers and thus of high quality. They nonetheless put in a good effort. Also, the choir is a good training ground for those who may go on to become choral scholars or lay clerks after their voices break.

4. Do you think the devotional experience is affected by it being the girls’ choir or the boys’ choir?

Not by reason of girls’ voices vs boys’ voices. If there is any difference in quality of the singing of a particular service, that may have an effect.

5. Are you aware that St Davids is unusual because the girls do many more services than the boys?

Historically, yes – though as time goes by, it should become less worthy of particular comment. What matters is that they do a good job!

6. Does it give St Davids a unique culture? And if so, what is unique about it?

It may have been more distinctive in the early days, but nowadays there is less objective reason that this should mean we are particularly different. That said, if the girls themselves bring particular levels of commitment to excellence, cooperation, drawing out the best in one another, mentoring the younger choir members etc, then that is all to the good. Any uniqueness reflects what that particular generation of girls (and similarly boys) happen to bring to our common life.

7. Are there any individuals you believe would be suitable for me to get in touch with for information on this topic?

I understand that you have had a wide range of contacts!

Zoom interview with Oliver Waterer [Musical Director of St Davids Cathedral Choir] -
Friday, 15th January 2021.

1. What are the differences between working with a boy and girl treble line?
I don't think the differences are between them being boys and girls particularly. I don't make a conscious decision to work with them differently, but I think in practical terms there are differences here because the boys' choir is a much younger group. Whereas the girls' choir are a much wider age range. You're working with people from the age of eight or nine or eighteen and the group's a bit larger. The boys, obviously their voices break at around the age of thirteen or fourteen so they're a younger group. Those are the practical differences. You're just working with different age children so you're perhaps doing slightly different repertoire. The boys' choir don't sing as often as the girls, so the repertoire is smaller and different. I try and keep the repertoire sort of independent so that when we're singing in the cathedral, we're providing a bigger breadth of music rather than both choirs singing the same music. Although there is a bit of cross over. You haven't got the worry about girls' voices changing with puberty or anything like that. I don't work with them differently because of their gender. I don't really see any difference. Singing technique is singing technique and choral technique is the same for both really. We try and keep those practices the same.

2. Is there a difference in repertoire when it comes to boys' and girls' choir?
The difference is not guided by their gender. It is guided by practical concerns about what is required of them. The girls' choir sing four services a week and the boys choir sing one and a half services a week and so the repertoire is smaller for the boys. You've got more rehearsal time with the girls because they have more services. The boys tend not to sing on Sundays and so their repertoire is restricted just to music for evensong. Whereas with the girls, we're preparing music for choral eucharists and choral matins on a Sunday as well as the odd special service. That's the difference in repertoire really. It is guided by the services they're singing for.

3. One of my chapters explores music composed by Sir Nicholas Jackson for the choir during his time at St Davids Cathedral, specifically looking at his writing for the treble line which was largely made up on girl choristers. I focus on his 1983 *Te Deum* and his 1977 *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* in the Lydian mode for treble voices only.

Are these pieces still in the repertoire?

They aren't in the repertoire but it's not a conscious decision, it's just we haven't got round to it really. When I'm choosing repertoire there are all sorts of influences in play. Usually, you're choosing the repertoire to fit the liturgical season whether it is Easter, Pentecost or whatever it might be. Or you might be preparing music for a special occasion. You might be trying to shoehorn music into services that you want to do in a concert in the festival or something. You're also thinking about repertoire that is core repertoire. For example, we must make sure we do that piece again because everyone liked that piece, and we don't want everyone to forget it because we spent a long time learning it. We try and keep the core repertoire topped up as well as learning new music. When choosing new pieces to learn you're thinking about the breadth of the repertoire for the choir as a whole. You might think we don't do many Tudor eucharist settings so let's learn one of those or we haven't done a modern piece for a while so let's do that. There are so many things going into the melting pot. It's certainly not a conscious decision and now that I know that they're there I'll go in and see what they're like. The repertoire is also guided by how much rehearsal time you might have in that particular week. You might think well that anthem is going to take a long

time to prepare so we have to play it safe this week to ensure there is enough rehearsal time to learn that anthem.

4. According to the Times there are now 739 girl choristers and 737 boy choristers in English Cathedrals. Why is it do you think that girl choristers are beginning to overtake boy choristers in terms of numbers?

I think it's certainly the case in St Davids that it is easier to recruit girls than boys and I think that is mainly because the recruiting pool is so tiny. The number of families living in a commutable area to the cathedral is probably the smallest in the whole country because most cathedrals are in big(ish) towns and cities. Of course, St Davids is the smallest city and smaller than most English villages. You haven't got that limit on the voices that you have with boys. You lose them at thirteen or fourteen. They've had their five years or so training and just become useful when their voices break. You have to have a large number of boys ideally to cushion that blow each time. To find enough boys and to have that choir singing to a reasonable standard is a huge challenge in St Davids which is the reason why things have become the way they have been. The girls have become the principal choir because you don't lose them at that time and you can keep them longer. The recruitment process doesn't need to be so quick I suppose. Recruiting choristers is certainly the biggest challenge of my job here and I don't think it's really a gender thing, it's more to do with lifestyle changes.

If you go back to Peter Boorman's day or even before, families were very different.

Generally, the wife was staying at home and looking after the children and the father was going out to work and families were much more standard and nuclear in that sense. Families didn't go away as much as they do now and there weren't the huge amounts of activities and distractions, so a choir in a community was a really welcome thing to do because there weren't a huge amount of activities competing with that. Family time, especially in cases where you have both parents working, family time at weekends and during Christmas and Easter is really precious to people. So, families are far less willing to make the commitment that the choir demands. I don't have a problem finding enough children who are willing to sing in the choir, it's finding the families who are willing to put in the commitment behind those children. That's the case for girls and boys. Some cathedrals keep the boys and girls on exactly equal terms. They will not have girls singing in the choir beyond the age of thirteen or fourteen. That doesn't happen here. But they do that in order to give the boys and girls equal opportunities. In an ideal situation that's good because it is a shame to lose boy trebles but it's equally fantastic to have girl trebles which would never have been on the cards years ago. I also think if you do have choirs where girls go up to eighteen that can be a really good thing because then you've got more mature musicianship and you can use that. For example, if you have a boys' choir and then a girls' choir that goes up to eighteen you can have a bigger breadth of repertoire as well so you can do repertoire that you might think twice about doing with boys because they're inherently younger than the older girls. This might not be possible if you only had one boys' choir. It's also enabled, going back to that idea of families and having to make that huge commitment to getting choristers to a cathedral four or five times a week, in the old days it was just one choir, that commitment would be up to eight or nine times a week. If you have two groups, it spreads the workload out a bit and allows a more manageable commitment for families.

In person interview with Simon Pearce [Organist at St Davids Cathedral] - Wednesday, 31st April 2021.

1. How important is the choir to the life of the cathedral?

I was just making a few pointers along the way to help you. The cathedral choir has been in operation since 1132, a long time. That's been daily said worship but there's certainly been reference to choristers in 1132. We hope the tradition continues for many years to come but trying to maintain that is quite tricky actually. There's not a massive population here as you well know. We're fluctuating between fifteen hundred to two thousand people in total, so the music is a vital part of worship here. It's like those questions you get asked in an RSCM music exam, why are you a chorister? And for me, it's all about bringing words to life. Just being spiritually moved by what you do on a daily basis. It doesn't matter whether you're performing to one person on a drab February night or whether it's to a packed Nine Lessons of Carols with nine hundred people there. It makes no difference to me. You get grabbed by the personality and the spirituality of the building and what you're offering, it's never changed over the centuries. To me, that's a real boost. I made a few points about bringing words to life through the beauty of the music and it doesn't matter if it's a matins, eucharist or evensong, they're all equally good services. It's just an unbroken sequence. It's wonderful to think that you are part of an amazing historical tradition here. It's not just here it's in every cathedral.

2. What do the girls' choir contribute to worship at St Davids Cathedral?

If we rewind two years ago, pre-covid, you're looking at the girls singing on a Wednesday for a service on their own. If it wasn't a service for them, they would have an extended practice. Then they sang with the Lay Clerks and Choral Scholars on Thursdays and then they sang twice on Sundays, whether it be matins, eucharist or evensong. So that's the way it has been hitherto. Now, we cannot use the building as much as there has to be periods of clean down between things so that does make life a little trickier and trying to maintain a regular pattern of services is quite hard as well. We can't get anywhere back to where we were before. At the moment now, Holy Week is a bit of a non-starter. Just before Christmas after the fire break in November we were looking at the girls coming in on a Wednesday to do a practice on their own. There would be no evensong with just the girls, it would just be a practice. Thursday would be full as usual and then you'd have potentially two services on a Sunday.

It's a shame because that never happened at Christmas. All the services we were preparing for or would normally be preparing for never actually happened. Nine Lessons in Carols, we were all prepped for it. We were going to do two public attended services and we never ended up doing it. We just recorded it as live on Facebook and YouTube and it got broadcast on the 22nd of December as it would have happened always. Midnight Mass was hastily recorded before Nine Lessons in Carols weirdly, on very little rehearsal and then that went out on a pre-record on Christmas Eve. For the first time in I don't know how many years there was no service on Christmas morning. I was trying to work out how many years it's been since that's happened to me. It's thirty-eight years since I haven't had anything to do on Christmas day. That was just gut wrenching. In a weird kind of way, it was nice thinking I could spend more time with the family but no, I just thought I should be somewhere else. The choir room is out of bounds. We can't put on as many services because we can only use the building when it is not open to the public. During the day it's open for visitors 10am until 3pm and then from 4:30 to 6:00pm it is ours to rehearse in the nave. That is the only place we can get the social distancing and the ventilation right so it's a bit of a nightmare really. That's how things currently stand.

But you can skip back through various stages. So if we're responding to the girls again, not much has changed for them really apart from the day they might sing. When I first arrived here in 1998, the girls did an evensong on their own on a Monday. They would come down from school, have a rehearsal as usual and then they would sing an evensong, slightly earlier at 5:15pm. Tuesday was still boys as it's always been and then Wednesday the girls would have a rehearsal in the evening. That's all they would have. They would sing on Thursday with the back row as they always have and then on Sunday all day. I was asking my wife Katherine because she goes back further than me [former girl chorister at St Davids Cathedral] and she said that pretty much nothing has changed since then. Even going back to Malcolm Watts' time, that's when it was a mixed line, they were doing the same sort of things. But there were no girls only services. They've only been introduced since Kerry Beaumont was here in the 1990s when the choir was split. I think Katherine remembers the time when they only sang with the back row.

3. What do the boys' choir contribute to worship at St Davids Cathedral?

They just sang on a Tuesday when I first arrived here. They had a morning rehearsal. They used to come in at 8:30am on a Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and a Friday but then there were only three of them in the choir. My brother-in-law William, Matthew Bennet and Ben Phillips. They were the only three in the choir. Because they lived locally in St Davids they could nip off to primary school up the road and get there in time for their morning start. They used to sing that one service on a Tuesday and Geraint Bowen used to spend pretty much all week preparing the psalm. You spent pretty much a day in the way of rehearsal reading through it just to make sure they could read it. You'd spend ages rotating about half a dozen chants they might know. In terms of repertoire, you were never really adventurous with it. That's the way it was. They rotated two Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis settings, Dyson in C minor and Bairstow in Eb and about six anthems. Dyson wrote a unison school setting and then Bairstow in Eb is like a parish congregational setting. I can hardly imagine a congregation singing it. It's really hard. Geraint left and then Tim Noon came in 2001 and he was here for about six years and he was not one to rest on his laurels Tim, ever. He was all for getting more bodies in the choir and doing more with them and he wanted to address the balance. They'd had this period of dearth. There was nothing going on for them bless them. They used to turn up religiously thinking why they would turn up at 8:30am to read a psalm. The commitment was there without a doubt. Tim was the one who introduced an extra service, on occasional Friday's, not every Friday with the back row for the boys. From that point onwards it's never looked backwards. There's always been the opportunity to sing services with the back row from that point on.

You do have limitations in repertoire when you're just focusing only on the boy's line and that's it. By the time Tim had left they were knocking out Kelly in C because it sounds cool. It wasn't without its ups and downs that introduction. There were some really dodgy services with the boys, but you just lived with it because it was the boys. By 2001 you're looking at about five or six kids. He'd increased it a little bit more.

Speaking from a personal point of view, the best time was Alex Mason's time. I don't know what it was, but he really had this knack of encouraging children, irrespective of gender to join the cathedral choir. There were several boys and a couple even travelled as far as Tenby. That is illustrative of how many more boys Alex Mason managed to recruit. That was its absolute heyday and that's probably the largest number of boys I've ever seen in my life. They still didn't do more, but the opportunity to sing with the girls was more. So, they at least got to experience better repertoire and join the big occasions like Easter Day and Christmas and make them feel valued. I think that's a key aspect of it is how much Alex Mason valued them. He even did a little disk with them. Never went on public sale, but it was just like a

Christmas present for parents. It gave them a real sense of purpose and value and that made a big difference actually. He took them on tour to Liverpool and we sang in the Met and I can't remember another time the boys did a tour. They may have done the odd little thing to Brecon or Llandaff in Tim's time, but that's the first proper tour we'd ever done really. Just making it cool like taking them to Anfield and giving them a tour of the football ground and he just had that knack.

With Daniel Cook, it just started to dwindle again really. He didn't really do any recruitment. It was a shame. He inherited a very good cathedral choir, but the numbers were quite slow to recover. By the time he'd left you sensed that the numbers needed to be addressed again and the same was happening with boys. Whoever has come here has always had a sense of the importance that the girls are the cathedral choir and not the boys. It is sad, but no one has ever tipped the balance the other way and said hang on, I think the boys should be doing more of this. There are some examples still of cathedrals that have no girls in the choir. There are also some very fine examples of choirs working together. The work of Sarah MacDonald at Ely is one of the best examples around. Aaron who was our Organ Scholar is her assistant to the girls' choir, yet Edmund is the director of the boys' choir and they have their own assistant there who accompanies the boys' choir. I would imagine that there are occasions where things do happen together. It's very much them working as a unit and she's trying to hold down a job at Selwyn College at the same time. That is one of the best working examples I've seen.

Yet, you've still got this dreadful situation that exists in Chichester where you've got no girls there because the director there was a gentleman called Alan Thurlow. He was the president of a society called 'For the Preservation of the English Choral Tradition' which was basically saying no to girls all the time. Girls were never entertained and it's still going on now. There is a new gentleman in charge and perhaps they don't need girls, perhaps with the number of services they sing they don't need another choir, perhaps they can't afford another choir. I don't know. There may be circumstances, but it's still pervades the building and they're two opposite examples of what is going on in the UK. Good and bad examples.

A budget for a cathedral choir is exorbitant. I know that Lincoln for instance, it's annual music bill is about half a million pounds. That's to pay for all its staff and the music that goes on in the cathedral. We moan about the fact that it might be several tens of thousands of pounds, but we're a drop in the ocean compared to some cathedrals. I wouldn't say we're offering any more or less services than other places. I think choir schools help enormously. If you're privileged enough to work in that choir school environment, then I think you get better returns. Here we're not lucky enough to have that but I think we do amazingly well for what we do. It's an elitist thing to say, but if you've got the money then you're able to do that. You know you're guaranteed a good education, to be looked after well. Some children thrive on that boarding experience, some hate it. But money does boil down to the bottom line sadly. When I was a child, I was a chorister at Wakefield Cathedral and even though there was no choir school attached it was sort of taken as read that the local grammar school was the school where all the choristers came from. I had to sit an entrance exam to get into the school. My parents paid fees, but the cathedral paid a third of the school fees. It's a similar arrangement. You sense that by being part of that choir you're helping your parents cover those costs. There are bursaries and things out there to help underprivileged families and that's good and I think choir schools are doing more to address that situation.

4. What are the differences when working with the girls' and boys' choir?

The repertoire is obviously pared back. If you sing less, you aren't going to learn. If you don't turn up to rehearsals as much you aren't going to learn as much material. It's a time and efficiency study really in terms of what you can get through. The girls know how many

services they have to produce every week so in a way, the rate of learning has to be faster. It's just one of those things. You know that when you turn up on a Thursday for an evensong and you've got all that music in your folder, the chances are that you've sang it many times before. Whereas with the boys, it is slightly drip fed to them. We give them time to absorb it because you know that there is no way they will learn it on the day because they're just not used to learning it that quickly. It's like when you introduce a new psalm to them. If they've never sung the words before you find a chant that they know. It's somewhere in there. You challenge them to some extent with the words, but you have to fit the mind psyche. To enable them to learn it quicker you give them a chant that they know. Or if you're giving them a new chant then you give them words that they know. It's always been like that.

It's like when I arrived. There were only two settings of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis because it is time saving. You might give them half a dozen anthems and rotate. It's a shame that that is the way it has always been. Tim Noon devoted a lot of time to learning repertoire with them. I think he was a lot quicker at teaching it to the boys and making it more fun and it terrified me sometimes the speed. You'd think, should it be going into a service that quickly? It gives them a sense of a buzz thinking are we really ready for this and yes, do it. Daniel Cook was a terrifying person to work for because he used to sometimes give brand new anthems to the girls on the night they were performed. I remember one concert. He was also trying to juggle half of them being missing for a school production. He said they were going to sing a piece that they had never seen before. That's him. If you've got confidence in yourself to do that, then you can have confidence in the choristers to pull that off.

With the boys it's more of a slow process and it's still a slow process to a degree because they don't turn up as often. They rehearse on a Tuesday and brush up on things for that evening which they've already looked at the Friday before. Then on Friday they'd be looking ahead to the following week. There's always a sense of forward looking and where you're going to be. If anything big is coming you need lots of time to prepare for it.

With the girls you could be slightly more cavalier about it. It improves their sight reading there's no doubt about it. If you start repeating repertoire over and over again without introducing anything new, your sight reading suffers terribly.

With Daniel Cook it reached its real peak with what they were churning out. He was really challenging when it came to things like concerts. I never remember a concert where they sang anything that they'd sung before. It was all stuff that was freshly learnt for a concert. For instance, there was a concert with the John Armitage Memorial where they were singing stuff by Judith Bingham. It was cantatas they'd never seen before, music with brass ensemble. There were some very odd things that had never been sung before. Paul Mealor, they'd never sung before and they just had to learn it. It was a massive programme, and it was a huge weight of responsibility. To me, that was what really kept the girls on their metal because they'd turn up enthusiastic and thirsting for more. In a way, the girls' choir just got better and better and he was always chucking new repertoire at them and extending their repertoire and that's really good. I think the girls liked living like that. It looked terrifying from the outside, but it was good fun and that's what made it really exciting for the kids. There is a difference in approach between the boys and the girls. It just depends on how brave you are.

I've always found the girls more work like in a rehearsal and very kind of focused and attentive. This is my personal opinion when I've done a rehearsal. They're very much focused on the job at hand and learning the music. In terms of what comes out, you wish the end result was a little bit more reflective of them as people. You felt they were always slightly robotic. They would sing things beautifully. Then you say, now think more about the musicality of it and explore the possibilities with the dynamic range here. It's a terribly sexist thing to say, it's almost like you have to give them details and they do it instantly. The boys seem to find that niche a little bit more naturally. They're just a bit more outgoing in a sense.

You kind of have to joke around a little bit more with the boys to get the result that you want but you do get it. The girls are incredibly focused, and they do an amazing job. If you say just go for it, they'll wait for their neighbour to help them. There's ten percent being held back. You feel the girls are holding back what you know is there but trying to find that extra ten percent from them is really one of the hardest things to find. Whereas with the boys you just get it, but sometimes it doesn't matter what the consequences are. Sometimes they can really make a hash of things but that's what makes it all so interesting. I'm sure I've told you the story about James Lancelot at Durham. He used to terrify the boys when making mistakes. They were horrified at making mistakes and they would cry. Then Daniel Cook took over. A boy made a mistake in a service and he was terrified of the consequences from Daniel. Daniel replied that it was ok and that we all make mistakes and not to worry about it. The boy was shocked that he was given permission to feel that way. Some directors live like that and you can't put a foot wrong, it's awful. I mean it's not without precedent here at St Davids. There were some terrible directors here in the 1920s and 30s and I think it was Hugh Morris who was organist here used to beat the boys and all sorts. It was terrible. It's all in a book 'A Century Through St Davids.' Thank goodness times have moved on since then. You just have to go with it really now. I've been party to enough terrible services and to me, that's what makes life funny. You've just got to laugh about it because we all do these things.

5. Is there a difference in repertoire when it comes to the boys' and girls' choir? Each director has their own approach. You've had one extreme to the other where they're throwing new music at you at such a rate you can barely cope with it, and then sometimes you're thinking crikey, I just want a bit more. Then there's some who have found a nice happy balance in the middle of new stuff to improve sight reading and keeping all the established stuff going. I've used it to a certain extent with my own choirs. There was a comment that Geraint made, it doesn't matter how rubbish it sounds just look at what we've achieved. I'm not that kind of person because I want things to be perfect or as near to perfect as possible and it's the way I've always been taught. There are people who would go in all guns blazing, never mind how it sounds. Tim Kitchell would always speak about the boys in the early 1990s. There were loads of them. Kerry Beaumont got loads of them in, but they were rough as anything. They wouldn't necessarily do lots of services because there wasn't very many of them but my goodness the sound was horrific. But that was one of Kerry Beaumont's great strengths was recruitment. He used to trawl schools endlessly to find boys. He took this decision to split them up, but he only inherited like three or four boys, so he knew he had work to do. He inherited a fine selection of girls to make the cathedral choir. In 1986 there were eight boys and ten girls. Then if you skip forward to 1988 you've got twelve girls and four boys and then if you skip forward to 1990 you've got fourteen girls and two boys. That's three generations of Malcolm Watt's where the number of boys were declining. You can see, before Kerry arrives that the mixed line is declining quite dramatically. By the time you get to 1991 when Kerry Beaumont arrives in the Festival Programme there is only a picture of the girls in it because there probably wasn't a boys' choir to inherit. You can see the genesis of how it's all come about. It's something we've been living with for years; the numbers have always fluctuated but it's just in terms of how appealing it really all is. Kerry took the decision in 1991 to split them up. Kerry had belief in himself that he would find what he was looking for and he did find it. To a certain extent he's still doing it. Sadly, Kerry has retired now but in his last job in Coventry Cathedral he went and did a trawl for boys for that choir. He listened to four hundred and fifty boys. He was utterly devoted to recruitment. I don't know how many he found but to listen to four hundred and fifty boys takes a long time and they all live presumably in the radius of the cathedral. The morning rehearsals at St Davids were a disaster in terms of the boys. I mean what boy

wants to wake up at 8:15am and go and rehearse psalms. Unless you live in that choir school environment then it isn't going to be possible. Often in a choir school environment the timetable fits around the choir.

I think the introduction of the back row helped with the boys just to make them realise what they eventually could become. That's an important factor. With a boy, you've got a finite life as a treble and where do you go after that point? I knew that when I was a boy. When my voice broke, you weren't allowed to join the back row for at least a couple of years and what do you do in that meantime? Here at least they've been really careful. Alex Mason certainly was. They maintained that interest in the choir by getting them to sing in the back row as alto, tenor or bass. Just keeping them there and feeling like they're cherished, that's really important. The trouble is now that boys look at being a chorister as a really uncool thing to do.

6. According to *The Times* there are now 739 girl choristers and 737 boy choristers in English Cathedrals. Why is it do you think that girl choristers are beginning to overtake boy choristers in terms of numbers?

I think that's the wrong question. I think actually it's not a question of overtaking, I think it's a question of re-dressing the balance. I've got no problem whatsoever with boys and girls being equal in number. I think that's great. Anything that keeps on supporting the services in the cathedral whether it's boys or girls, I don't care. It's wonderful to have music there. In terms of the quality of the training, it's exactly the same. It doesn't matter whether Sarah MacDonald directs the girls' choir and somebody else directs the boys' choir you know that the end result is going to sound exactly the same. If you've got a director who's passionate about the whole thing, you've got the right balance. I've already mentioned about Ely being a really good example. I'm glad we've got this equality of opportunity. Why should boys only get this opportunity? I know historically it was something that boys did, but why not girls? It's like that thing that happened when the choristers did that broadcast in 1966. Somebody congratulated the *boys* on their splendid sound when actually it was the girls. You can train girls voices but there's a point at which it's too hard to step back and say you need to sound like a boys' voice. A voice at the age of eight or nine is a really malleable product. You can train it to do pretty much whatever you want, and you aren't going to have those little tendencies to put vibrato in where none should exist. You can make a voice sound as you want it.

Geraint was obsessed with the sound of Westminster Cathedral. That was a very steely boys sound and that's the way he wanted the girls here to sound. It's not got a hard edge to it, it's just a solid firm line. It's a lovely sound. I think on radio it's very hard to distinguish between boys and girl's voices. I heard the girls singing a broadcast here back in 1998, a few months before I arrived here. It was just wow. You can't tell that these are girls. It just sounds like a beautiful treble line and it was really something to behold. It just didn't sound feminine like. It matched the building and the music, and it was a perfect marriage of everything and that is what you want.

The choir school business is interesting. We don't have a choir school here, but I think if you've got the luxury of having a co-educational school in a sense, you're going to have girls there who want sample what it is like to be part of the cathedral choir. You can't deny them the opportunity to do that. A case in point was Llandaff. It's one of these Woodard Schools. They have a boys' choir where all the boys are educated at Llandaff Cathedral School so it's open to everybody, presumably by an entrance exam because it's a fee-paying school. The girls there are also being trained to sing sacred music in the school and there was an opportunity to try and get them to sing in the cathedral. There was a huge amount of resistance to that, and it took a long time and nobody from the cathedral was prepared to

accompany them or welcome them with open arms. Thankfully, it stopped, and they have a good director of music there, but it was really hard to get the girls a little bit more involved even for one service. We're not talking about sharing anything just adding a service during the week that they could do. With a co-educational school there has got to be opportunity for both kids. If I went to the Kings School in Ely as a girl and there was that magnificent building there and I had a love of choral music and no opportunity to express myself, I would be gutted. I'm rather pleased that there's foresight there to actually do that.

7. What do you believe could be done to reinvigorate the number of boy choristers at St Davids Cathedral?

At the moment they're mixed up with the girls. It's great for them because they sing more than they usually would so perhaps they're beneficiaries of this whole covid thing. They're on their own, there's only two of them left, it's really sad. It comes down to I think really the director of music. Several of the current choristers are children of members of staff. But when we're in a situation like we are now, Christian [Simon's son] is fourteen so there's no chance of him coming back to the boys' choir whatsoever. You've got to get out into the schools. Being a director of music is not a job where you turn up and do your job in the cathedral. It's very much a job now where you have to find these kids. They will not come to you, especially in a place like this.

You've got so many other activities that consume parents' time. You've got football practice, swimming, there's so much going on around here and it's exciting to be involved in that. If you said to them, come and sing twice on a Sunday you've got a difficult job trying to persuade them, the parents as well as the children that it's something worthwhile attending. That's one of the complications for me is competition for time. It's really hard because you've got to educate those parents into knowing what is involved with being a chorister and it's a massive commitment from them. It's a commitment to drive you there that many times a week. Sometimes you're lucky you can just walk down from school, but on a Sunday you're there all day pretty much. Open days are one way to encourage children but there's also got to be something there for them to want to join. If there are only two boys, it's really difficult to convince them it's something worthwhile attending if it looks like the dying dregs of what's left of the boys' choir. Are they doing tours? Are there CDs in the pipeline? Are there any other opportunities they can do? It all helps. Outreach is a massive part of the job now and I think it's also good for them to experience what the cathedral is actually like.

I used to run the school choir here for about six years and being able to rehearse here was great. I got to know them really well and then if I go in and say I want to listen to all these kids in years X, Y and Z and they would all come through because they knew me. If you're an unfamiliar figure who doesn't show your face very much in that school, you're going to be instantly on the back foot. That helps me enormously when it comes to things like Junior Choir because to me that is an amazing conduit to the cathedral choir. It's stalled in a sense because they're solely responsible at the moment for producing all the output for one service which is great, but they never get to experience what it is like beyond that. What is beyond them at the end of primary school is really important.

Alex Mason was the best proponent of that. He was really good at it. I've been trying to think of new ways to do it. Putting a promotional video together or something with the youngsters that they would be able to play in the class might be a way of introducing them to what it's all about. The cathedral is a scary place for a child who has never been in it before and somebody who's been asked to stand up and sing with a bunch of like-minded kids is a pretty scary prospect really. Once you've done it once, it's great and you want to do it more. You've got to get them through the door. Likewise, the parents are hard to educate. They don't really seem to understand what it involves. Some parents grasp it and are really

committed. Others say well, you can give it up after a while. If you're not happy about it, you can drop it and go on to something else. Parents need educating. Being a chorister looks good on your CV and if you say you've been part of a cathedral choir, every employer knows that that shows commitment, and you understand responsibility. It teaches you so many life skills.

8. Are you aware that St Davids is unusual because the girls do many more services than the boys?

Well yes, I am aware. As you can see historically, the boys have never really sung many services as opposed to the cathedral choir. It's always going to be harder to recruit boys than girls, especially in a place like this. I'm not suggesting that it's impossible, but I think it's going to be the status quo for many years to come that the girls will always be the stronger choir rather than the boys. It's going to have its ups and downs. You can see the numbers. It has its heyday in the 2011's and then dips down to virtually nothing. I think it's peer pressure most of the time. Is it a cool thing to be doing? It is losing face slightly is choral music and Anglican tradition. I think in a way this covid pandemic has made life harder because we've got so much more of a job on our hands to encourage these people back. That's where we've got to be more proactive and get out and find these children.

I am aware but I don't think it will ever get to a state where they'll sing equally or more than the girls. It'll always be the girls here because it's been that way for thirty years now. It would take a pretty radical step to turn it around. The process of where we are now has not happened overnight. It has evolved over a number of years. You've got all that repertoire and it's passing on that repertoire to the junior next to you and that person's junior. It's something to feed on. With the boys, if you're handling a couple of services a week the aspiration is not quite there really. The opportunity is there but you know you won't get the boys singing Vierne Missa Solennelle on a Sunday because it's never going to happen. It'll be interesting to see whether it remains a mixed line and how that would go down. Interesting question that one. I don't think anyone would be brave enough to try and drive a wedge there and say let's have it mixed again. I don't see that happening because I don't think the girls would put up with it. At the moment the girls don't seem to mind because there are only two boys. But I think if there were issues with tuning or singing out of time or quite obviously there were problems then they would say. At this stage I don't see that happening. With the boys you're working with a finite resource. At some point it's going to stop. We're lucky with the girls here because we keep them until they're eighteen and you can achieve so much more in that length of time.

9. Does the fact that the girls do more services than the boys give St Davids a unique culture? And if so, what is unique about it?

It is a unique culture here. People are quite surprised when they come to evensong and see the girls processing under the organ and I think they expect to see a boys' choir, I don't know. Equally, when they see three boys walking under the organ, they think are these really capable of singing this service? It is unique. Could the same be said for Salisbury Cathedral Choir, is that a unique situation? They do 50/50 in terms of services and we do say 80/20. We are unique without a doubt. There is no other cathedral choir that has the girls singing the top line for the majority of the services. I don't think it suffers for it in any kind of way, we're just victims of circumstance. That's it. I think it's great. I don't think it makes things any better or any worse, it's just St Davids. It works. I like the fact that we have these services where Llandaff girls come down here and they sing a service with our girls and it makes them realise that there are other ones who do it as well. It makes them feel really proud of what they're achieving here and what they can do, form new friendships. They're no different. We

all get on with our own job in our own cathedral and not two cathedrals are alike. So, it is unique definitely.

Interview via email with Jenny Kitchell [Verger at St Davids Cathedral] and Tim Kitchell [Alto Lay Clerk at St Davids Cathedral Choir] - Monday, 15th February 2021.

1. How important is the choir to the life of St Davids Cathedral?

The choir is an absolutely integral part of the life of the cathedral. Bishop Wyn used to call it the 'soul' of the place and having suffered an almost completely music-free year here, I'm in complete agreement. It feels soulless. In general terms, as well, the Anglican tradition revolves around the sung offices and to have the cathedral church of any diocese failing to offer choral services would be (and is, temporarily) a sorrowful thing. As general church attendance steadily declines, the one thing that attracts increasing congregations is cathedral choral worship - and that's for complex reasons that I'm sure you've researched, but not the least is the human need for beauty. Great music, along with majestic architecture and beautiful liturgy helps satisfy our inchoate longing for meaning.

2. What do the girls' choir contribute to worship at St Davids Cathedral?

Sorry to be pedantic, but there isn't a girls' choir at St Davids. There's a cathedral choir whose treble line is, uniquely, female. You will have been told how this came about, so I won't repeat the series of events that led to this situation, but the outcome has been a small marvel. While other cathedrals (some grudgingly) began to allow girls to sing, they were always in a separate choir with a very secondary presence until recently. In St Davids we have had the exact reverse situation for decades.

3. What do the boys' choir contribute to worship at St Davids Cathedral?

After the collapse of the top line and the subsequent recruitment of girls, there was a fairly sporadic presence of boys in the choir for a while, but times were very different, and it wasn't always easy to enthruse boys about singing alongside the second sex. By the early 90s it had been some years since boys had sung in the cathedral at all, which was hardly a good situation.

The then choirmaster, Kerry Beaumont (genius bloke) was awarded a fat grant by - I think - FCM to found a boys' choir for the best of reasons, including the not inconsiderable fact that boys turn into tenors and basses, which is dead useful if you want to stock your (or anyone else's) back line in years to come. This has given the opportunity of excellent musical and vocal training to boys in the county - just as cathedrals elsewhere were offering that chance to girls.

4. Do you think the devotional experience is affected by it being the girls or boys singing?

I don't think it's fair to compare the quality of the services. There have been some wonderful voices in the boys' choir and many excellent musicians, but the choir has always been hampered by the extremely small pool for recruitment. The fact that the girls have ten years in which to sing effectively doubles the available personnel. The boys' choir has struggled with numbers ranging from one (Luke Jenkins. He sang a whole service solo. Unutterably fabulous human being) to more than a dozen from time to time.

I yield to nobody in my admiration and appreciation for the boys - my son was a chorister from '93 to '98 - but the experience of choral evensong with the boys is very different from the experience of choral evensong with the choristers of the main cathedral choir. The boys' choir has provided huge pleasure to parents, clergy and congregations over the years and has fulfilled Kerry's aim of equipping boys with the ability to sing confidently in the back line of any cathedral choir as well as giving them a great education and lots of fun along the way.

5. Are you aware that St Davids is unusual because the girls do many more services than the boys?

See above.

6. Does this give St Davids a unique culture? And if so, what is unique about it? There are many things about St Davids that make the culture unique, but I don't think that the choir, as such, contributes to that. True, the top line is, uniquely, female, but when the choir cannot be seen (ie during broadcasts, or by congregation seated in the presbytery) people invariably assume the choir has boys in the top line. It is a source of pride that we are still the only Welsh cathedral foundation deemed good enough to broadcast live for Radio 3's Choral Evensong. It is staggering that music of that quality can emerge from a village, and tribute to the talent and energy of all the choirmasters since Kerry. We are incredibly lucky - and we should never take the music for granted. It sometimes seems to me that the whole edifice is founded on fairy-dust and wishes. Beautiful and fragile.

Tim's response to the difference between the boy and girl choristers within a rehearsal environment:

Difference is that the choir room with the boys is fizzing with energetic, younger energy. There is no influence of adult boys, they're more inventive. Witnessed a sociological change around the time of the Spice Girls where all of a sudden, the girl choristers became far more self-confident which had a positive effect on the sound they were producing.

Interview via email with Luke Phillips [Tenor Lay Clerk at St Davids Cathedral] -Saturday,
13th February 2021.

1. How important is the choir to the life of St Davids Cathedral?

Anybody who works in Cathedral Music will argue and agree, that unless you have a strong and powerful musical element to the liturgy of the Cathedral, you will struggle to get across the meaning of what it is to be Christian. Choral evensong for example, was created so that the congregation did not have to do anything during the service. The whole of point was for the parishioner to sit and reflect on the words being sung from the Preces, Psalm, Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis. The whole purpose to bring the individual closer to God.

Notwithstanding the big impact that the choir has on the worship liturgically, by having a choir made up of choristers from as young as eight or nine up to the age of eighteen years, enables the age demographic of the attendees to be brought down!

2. What do the girls' choir contribute to worship at St Davids Cathedral?

As we know, St Davids was the first Cathedral in the land to introduce girls as its main Cathedral Choir – this being brought about by a nasty flu that swept through the stalls of the boys' choir. Girl choristers in general offer the unique opportunity to continue singing until the age of eighteen, when they typically leave to go to university. By having girls as the main top line at St Davids Cathedral, it provides a great opportunity to explore more advanced repertoire for the girls on their own, but also for the Vicars Choral and Choral Scholars joining them in the back row.

3. What do the boys' choir contribute to worship at St Davids Cathedral?

The boys at St Davids Cathedral have a more reduced role in the daily worship of the cathedral compared to other cathedrals in the land. The boys typically sing around three services a fortnight. Whilst the attendance of the boys' choir is low and continues to dwindle, it is vitally important to ensure that the tradition of having a boys' choir is kept. Personally, I feel it helps eliminate the stigma that singing is only for girls.

4. What are the differences when working with the girls'/boys' choir?

The main difference is the age. Girls at St Davids typically join at the age of around nine or ten and sing until they leave at the age of eighteen. By having the girls sing until eighteen, you are able to achieve a more mature sounding voice(s). Whereas with the boys, again they join around the eight, nine or ten mark, but will stop when their voices break – which can be as early as twelve or as late as sixteen in my case! I have generally found that the boys are much more enthusiastic and oblivious to the challenges of singing high music or long notes, whereas with the girls, it is a much more serious affair. There is not right or wrong way!

5. What do you believe could be done to reinvigorate the number of boy choristers at St Davids Cathedral?

I think there needs to be a big positive recruitment drive throughout the year, not just go to a school in St Davids once a year and hope you get one or two boys to join. It needs to go as far as Haverfordwest and Fishguard. The cathedral needs to showcase how important the experience can be for their musical development but also development in other areas like reading, discipline, appreciation of team work etc. It would be good to perhaps invite another cathedral choirs from the country to come down and run a join chorister workshop day.

6. Are you aware that St Davids is unusual because the girls do many more services than the boys?

Certainly, I know they do as I have been singing with both cathedral choirs for the last six years, but I think in St Davids it is pretty common knowledge that the girls do the majority of services each week. But, if you were to drive five miles outside of St Davids, I would hazard a guess that not many people know there is a cathedral choir. Again, this comes down to positive publicity and recruitment. If you have conversations with other colleagues in the cathedral music 'industry', they all assume and believe it was Salisbury Cathedral that set the girls' choir up first – but it wasn't!

7. Does it give St Davids a unique culture? And if so, what is unique about it?
Certainly, in the Church in Wales it does as St Davids is the only 'professionally' run cathedral choir as everybody gets paid, whereas at Newport, Llandaff and Brecon, for example, it is all voluntary.

8. Are there any individuals you believe would be suitable for me to get in touch with for information on this topic?

Do get in touch with Andrew De Silva. He was a boy Chorister at Peterborough Cathedral, and then subsequently a Lay Clerk. He then moved to Winchester Cathedral as a Lay Clerk for ten years. That is an interesting place as the girls only sing one service a week – but are formidable. Let me know if want his details.

1. How important is the choir to the life of St Davids Cathedral?

I feel that the choir is very important to the life of the cathedral. Music is one of the key parts of worship for many people, both those in the choir and members of the congregation and helps draw them closer to God in their worship. At St Davids, under normal circumstances, there would be choir presence almost every day for sung evensong and at Sunday morning eucharist as well. As such it forms one of the core aspects of the cathedral's worship and from feedback and comments I have heard from members of the congregation at various times, I know that having music and the choir means a lot to many of them and enhances their worship, a sentiment I have felt from congregations in every church and cathedral I have sung at.

2. What do the girls' choir contribute to worship at St Davids Cathedral?

The girls' choir usually sing at two evensongs during the week as well as Sunday morning eucharist or matins and Sunday evensong. They contribute a high level of musicality on a consistent basis in their role as the main cathedral choir, to enhance our worship.

3. What do the boys' choir contribute to worship at St Davids Cathedral?

The boys' choir usually sing at one or two evensongs during the week. In recent years at least, while I have been at the cathedral, they have been a much smaller choir than the girls, and as such the repertoire has been slightly smaller and perhaps less ambitious as a result. They still contribute in the same way to the worship of the cathedral; they just have less services than the girls' choir.

4. What are the differences when working with the girls'/boys' choir?

As previously mentioned, in my time at the cathedral the boys' choir has been lacking in numbers and so the repertoire has been smaller, often resulting in less work needed prior to rehearsals to ensure I am prepared in my role singing in the back row of the boys' choir compared to with the girls' choir. However, there is not much difference in terms of my role during rehearsals and services. I still aim to sing at the same high level and realise the musical ideas and direction of the director of music.

Another factor in the differences between the girls' and boys' choirs is the fact that boys have to leave the choir when their voice breaks, usually in their early teens, whereas the girls can remain in the choir until they turn eighteen and often head off to university or work. As such the social dynamic can be a little bit different, especially for me and the other scholars, who are only a few years older than the oldest girls in the choir. For example, having conversations with the girls about their GCSEs or A levels and university applications.

5. What do you believe could be done to reinvigorate the number of boy choristers at St Davids Cathedral?

The decline in numbers in the boys' choir is definitely not an easy problem to solve. I feel like there has been a problem with the social perception of singing choral music for boys. I know that it was certainly considered 'uncool' by most of my peers growing up, in fact classical music in general was to some extent, but singing as a treble, or 'like a girl' as it was usually described if making fun of it, particularly so. Fortunately for me all my family sang so I had a very supportive environment, and also everyone within the musical community is always very supportive of each other.

I feel like to reinvigorate the numbers you need to be reaching out to local schools and getting the boys interested early on, as I think the social stigma from peers doesn't really kick in until they are a bit older, and once they are in then as long as they are enjoying it, they won't want to leave. St Davids has an extra challenge that it is a small community with only one school in the City itself. Also, unlike many cathedrals, it does not have an attached cathedral school with boarding options, so choir recruitment is limited to those that live locally.

Without the option of choristers from further afield, I would say that to bolster the ranks of the boys' choir you would need to put all your focus on working with the local school in St Davids, and any others in the local surrounding area, to cultivate school choirs and school singing and to have links to the cathedral. Members of choir staff going into the schools to be part of their rehearsals and then to tell them about the cathedral choir to get them interested. Perhaps mention the existence of choir pay, if you want to be slightly cynical about it, and to encourage and invite any boys that are enjoying it at school to audition for the cathedral choir.

6. Are you aware that St Davids is unusual because the girls do many more services than the boys?

I am very glad that more and more cathedrals now have girls' choirs, and I am aware that St Davids is one of the few, if not the only, in which the girls' choir is the 'main' cathedral choir that sing in the majority of the services.

7. Does it give St Davids a unique culture? And if so, what is unique about it?

I think in some ways it does give St Davids a unique feel, but in other ways, not so much. From my personal experience I mentioned the social dynamic within the choir, and in many ways, it is a really big, important thing to have the girls as the main choir. It is certainly important in the way it proves that there is absolutely no reason why girls should not be in cathedral choirs. They can clearly produce just as high a level of music and St Davids can be used as an example against anyone who still tries to argue that cathedral choirs should be exclusive to boys.

For me personally though, it was not such a huge change when I came to St Davids. As I am fairly young still, I have grown up seeing equality barriers being exposed and broken down in many areas of life, though there is still more progress to be made. I also grew up singing in both my school and local church choirs with a mix of girl and boy trebles. I then sang in choirs at university that were made up of female sopranos and altos, so I have always sung in choirs with girls, and it was not a particular change in culture for me in that way.

1. How important is the choir to the life of St Davids Cathedral?

As a member of St Davids Cathedral Choir, I think that the choir is a very important part of the cathedral. The choir is part of a very rich British choral tradition. It is often viewed as a figure head in terms of Welsh Cathedral choirs, this is supported by the cathedral being the home of the patron saint of Wales. The tradition of having a cathedral choir for several centuries means that choral music is imbedded within the very fabric of what St Davids Cathedral does day to day. This feeling for me has been made even more obvious in the past year as the cathedral choir has been silent for a large portion of the pandemic. I think the few occasional services that the choir has been able to sing, has emphasised to me what a choir brings to services. Away from the services themselves the choir brings a great sense of community to the cathedral. The choir brings in people from all over the UK not just St Davids and is multi-generational. One thing that I think is very unique to St Davids Cathedral Choir is the sense of choristers being in the choir as their parents were in the choir. If you speak to anyone in St Davids, they will have been in the choir themselves or will know someone who has. The sense that it is perfectly acceptable to have been in a cathedral choir is something I haven't experienced elsewhere.

2. What do the girls' choir contribute to worship at St Davids Cathedral?

The girls' choir is the main cathedral choir so are the main source of music within the cathedral. This is very unique as girls in most cathedrals are either the second choir to a boys' choir or have a 50/50 split. The idea of the girls' choir, known simply as St Davids Cathedral Choir here, is that they are the main provider of choristers. This has been imbedded within the local community at St Davids and so the idea that other cathedrals are still catching up with the introduction of girls' choirs seems very strange. I think that the girls' choir contribute so much to the worship of St Davids that it is really important to keep the choir going and developing.

3. What do the boys' choir contribute to worship at St Davids Cathedral?

The cathedral boys' choir play a supporting role to St Davids Cathedral Choir. They are no longer the main choir for the cathedral but still sing for services regularly and are well thought of within the cathedral for their enthusiasm.

4. What are the differences when working with the girls'/boys' choir?

The girls' choir is more reliable and stronger than the boys' choir which means the level of repertoire and performance is much higher with the girls' choir. Despite being small in number the boy's enthusiasm still makes it an enjoyable experience to sing with them. Both choirs are enjoyable to sing with for different reasons.

5. What do you believe could be done to reinvigorate the number of boy choristers at St Davids Cathedral?

The biggest issue the cathedral choir has always faced and will always face is recruitment. Because of our location it is always difficult to get a large number of choristers. I have often found that recruitment for choirs comes in waves and the boys' choir can sometimes swell in size for no clear reason. I think one of the biggest issues with getting boys to sing in a choir is the stigma around it not being seen as cool. As someone who stuck through being told singing in a choir wasn't cool for many years, I can understand why many boys are reluctant

to join. It would require a lot of persistence to change the image of choirs as being something that is good to do before we see a big shift in the numbers in the boys' choir.

6. Are you aware that St Davids is unusual because the girls do many more services than the boys?

Yes, I'm very aware of this. It is one of the things I like most about St Davids that we are unique in having a girls' choir being our main choir. So many places are still only just introducing girls' choirs or finally putting them on equal standing with boys' choirs.

7. Does it give St Davids a unique culture? And if so, what is unique about it?

I think the most unique thing about the culture here is that the cathedral choir is drawn from locals and so there is a rich heritage of choristers across several generations within families. Often at cathedrals with boarding choristers they are not local to their cathedral. This means that they often don't stay within the community in the future. This is why St Davids is unique. We see many people who have been involved or know someone who was involved with the cathedral choir and so it doesn't seem so strange to be a member of it.

Monday, August 15, 1966 5

Pembrokeshire Viewpoint

Girls may solve choir problem at cathedral

GIRLS in a cathedral choir!

The purists will undoubtedly shudder at the prospect.

Influenced by centuries of tradition, they will probably say there is no possible substitute for the pure, strong voices of boy trebles and male altos.

But, if you'll excuse the misquotation, necessity is the mother of innovation. An acute shortage of choirboys has forced St. David's Cathedral Chapter to sanction the introduction of choirgirls—an historic step paralleled possibly in only one other cathedral.

Organist and choirmaster, Mr. Peter Boorman, who was so desperate two years ago that he advertised in the local papers for choirboys, has persuaded the Chapter to admit girls into what has traditionally been an all-male stronghold for centuries.

"I have got used to the idea, for the boy situation is even worse now than it was two years ago," he told me. "I am confident that if the girls are kept the standard of singing will be very high and, if the type of voice is carefully chosen, the singing should not be too different from a boys' choir."

"But I have no intention of using these girls for alto—we have male altos in the choir," he added.

by DEREK REES

St. David's Secondary School stepped in to save the day.

The girls' music mistress, Miss Rosalyn Charles, of Haverfordwest, who is an honours graduate of University of Wales and head of music at Ysgol Dewi Sant, has been appointed deputy organist and choirmistress at the cathedral and Mr. Boorman welcomes this step as a considerable contribution to the solution of his choir problems.

"Miss Charles has done a wonderful job in training her sixth form girls, and, since she is Welsh-speaking she will be a great help to the music here," he said. "She has already deputised for me on innumerable occasions and this has lightened the load considerably."

Mr. Boorman has 10 names of potential choir-girls and hopes to start training them in September. Their training will take six weeks to two months, so by Christmas he hopes to have a very well-balanced choir again. Whether the girls will be robed or simply dressed in typical school-choir fashion is a question yet to be decided.

The arrival of the girls does not mean that recruitment of boys will slow down,

increasing the honorarium paid to the choir," said Mr. Boorman.

"But I wish parents would realise what valuable training the boys get in the choir—and they get paid to receive it. The odd thing is that parents will send their children miles for music lessons and are prepared to pay quite large fees for them. My own pupils come from as far away as Cardiff, Cardigan and Tenby.

"But parents just do not seem to appreciate that boys get a far better training for nothing in the choir and they get good pocket money in the bargain!"

I am sure that everyone who knows the Cathedral—and there are tens of thousands—will wish Mr. Boorman success in his choirboy campaign. But it seems there is only one way to ensure an adequate and constant supply of choirboys, and that is to have a cathedral school at St. David's.

"A prep school has got to come," said Mr. Boorman.

"And I think it will come in time."

Until then the choirboy shortage is going to be a perennial problem.

Low population

Low population

THE shortage of choirboys in the St. David's area has proved a headache for Mr. Boorman for several years. Not only has the cathedral a very small population to draw from—the city's inhabitants total only about 1,100 while the total from the surrounding parishes of Llanreithan, Llanhowel, Llandeloy, Llanrhian and Solva is only another 1,400-odd—but other contemporary considerations weigh against cathedral attendance.

Summer-time potato picking and other lucrative farm work, trips in the family car in the evenings, Sundays at the seaside, all take their toll of the young talent that might be helping to provide the music in the Mother Church of Wales.

True these problems exist in other cathedral cities, but few have the population problems of St. David's, which, let's face it, is little more than a village in terms of inhabitants.

Most cathedral cities have populations greater than Pembrokeshire's 96,000 to draw from.

Mr. Boorman told me that he believes Derby Cathedral is the only other one to recruit girl choristers. St. David's currently boasts only 10 choirboys and their average age is low. The youngest is seven and the oldest ten.

The Cathedral choir was always a pretty inter-denominational set-up. Traditionally, the boys of chapel people have sung in it, and still do, although there are some whose parents put the chapel first.

Embarrassment

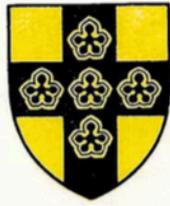
HAVING the bare minimum of boys means that very often during the summer holidays only one or two are available and this can cause Mr. Boorman and the cathedral considerable embarrassment. Only a few weeks ago when the Archbishop and the Bishop were present at the very important ceremony of opening the new Cathedral Hall, only two boys turned up, and the girls of

...not mean that recruitment of boys will slow down.

Prep. school?

I STILL intend to keep up my frenzied search for boys and the Dean and Chapter have helped by

Appendix 3 - Cymdeithas Gerdd Ysgol Dewi Sant Leaflet



YSGOL
DEWI
SANT

CYMDEITHAS
GERDD

*The Music Society of
St Davids County Secondary School*

PRESIDENT
GERAINT EVANS, C.B.E.

THE NEW SOCIETY

The Society was formed in the autumn of 1966 to widen the scope of the School concerts and to increase their value and appeal to performer and listener alike. The general policy is to arrange such programmes as will afford our singers and players the experience of appearing alongside eminent artists rather than to compete with organisations able to bear the cost of fully professional concerts.

ITS FINANCES

Concert costs are covered by ticket sales and with the help of a body of well-wishers who have built up a guarantee fund. The number of replies to a circular letter has been most encouraging; a list will shortly be published and all names will appear on the concert programme. The Society needs more guarantors. Details of the scheme will gladly be supplied by members of the Committee.

ITS NEXT CONCERT

Thursday, 2nd February, at 7.0 in the School Hall. The programme will include Britten's 'A Ceremony of Carols' (in which Ann Griffiths, the distinguished Welsh harpist and a Vice-President, will accompany the School Choir. Tickets will be available from 1st January onwards.

VICE-PRESIDENTS

SIR THOMAS ARMSTRONG, D.Mus.
Principal of the Royal Academy of Music

EARL BALDWIN OF BEWDLEY

SIR ARTHUR BLISS, D.Mus., LL.D.
Master of the Queen's Musick

GLYN DANIEL, Ph.D., Litt.D.
Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge

~~DESMOND DONNELLY, M.P.~~

GWYNFOR EVANS, M.P.

LEON GOOSSENS, C.B.E.

ANN GRIFFITHS

ALUN HODDINOTT, D.Mus.

Professor IAN PARROTT, D.Mus.
Professor of Music, University College, Aberystwyth

EDMUND RUBBRA, C.B.E., D.Mus.
Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford

~~VISCOUNT TENBY~~

MANSEL THOMAS