

Blackburn Cathedral: Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2013

# Music & More online Supplement No. 26

Choral Evensong broadcast live on BBC Radio 3



**Samuel Hudson**, our talented Director of Music, fielded a full choral team for this live broadcast: the Cathedral Choir of Men and Boys, and the Cathedral Girls' Choir. Our organist was our equally talented **Shaun Turnbull** whose pages were turned by our 2013-14 organ scholar, **Karen Au**.

The clergy also fielded a fine team: **Dean Christopher Armstrong**, and **Canons Andrew Hindley, Sue Penfold and Ian Stockton**.



Our producer was **Simon Vivian**, who has visited Blackburn Cathedral many times in recent years, not only to produce broadcasts, but also, sometimes, to sing in the chorus for concerts. (His brother, **James Vivian**, is the new Director of Music of St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle.)

Samuel Hudson conducted the rehearsal that afternoon with a calm assurance which communicated itself to every singer. This was reinforced by Simon Vivian, whose comments were also calm and to the point.



The music was ambitious:  
Introit: *Sicut cervus* (Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks) – Palestrina  
Responses – Herbert Sumsion  
Psalm 136 ('For his mercy endureth for ever')  
Canticles: Rubbra in A flat  
Anthem: *They that go down to the sea in ships* – Herbert Sumsion

There were two hymns for choir and congregation:

*Just as I am*, and

*Lord of beauty*, both tunes by former organist of Blackburn Parish Church, Henry Smart, whose bicentennial we celebrate this year.

Postlude: *Toccata* (Plymouth Suite) Percy Whitlock





The Precentor was Canon Hindley, who led the service with calm assurance and authority.

*Simon Vivian making a point during the rehearsal.*

There was an engrossed congregation including some choir parents (who, rightly, were glowing with pride at their children's expertise) and also by some other members of our regular congregation.



But there were also two fairly elderly people who were sitting immediately behind your editor whose conversation he couldn't help overhearing:

*'I set off from Guildford at 7.0 am today to be here for this service.'*

Her companion answered, *'And I've come from Lichfield!'*

*'I've never been here before; I didn't expect much from the sight of the cathedral in the rain from Blackburn station, but now I'm in the cathedral I'm so wonderfully impressed.'*

These two visitors were so delighted with everything that they saw and heard that afternoon (even though it was raining hard) that your editor gave each of them copies of our music brochure, and also of *Music & More*.

Apparently they, and a few other friends, make a habit of going around the country to attend broadcast Choral Evensongs. What a wonderful way in which to spend one's retirement!



Not only had the music for our broadcast been chosen with great care, but the words of the anthem, hymns and lessons were beautifully integrated – for those who had ears to hear:

The first lesson (Jonah chapter 1) was read by **Canon Penfold**.

It told the story of Jonah, who was fleeing in a boat from God. Jonah was caught in a storm, and was finally flung overboard by the crew, and swallowed by a whale!

The second lesson, (Luke 5, 1-11) read by **the Dean**, gave the opposite message – of the disciples in their boats catching fish (not being swallowed by them) and then following Jesus (not running away from Him).

The words of the anthem were taken from Psalm 107, which echoed the message of the two lessons:

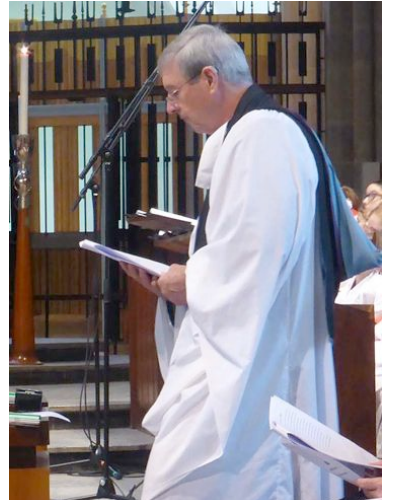
*They that go down to the sea in ships;  
and occupy their business in great waters;*

*These men see the works of the Lord: and his wonders in the deep.*

*For at his word the stormy wind ariseth: which lifeth up the waves thereof.*

*They are carried up to the heaven, and down again to the deep: their soul melteth away because of the trouble...*

*So they cried unto the Lord in their trouble: and he delivered them from their distress.*



The music, by Dr Herbert Sumsion, ran the whole gamut of expression from fast and loud to slow and soft.

And not only did the choir sing so expressively, but Shaun Turnbull's accompaniment was very exciting, as was his accompaniment of the Canticles; for Edmund Rubbra had written an independent organ part which often seemed to have no bearing at all upon the music that the choir sang!



The whole service was not only a lively presentation of the Gospel in the spoken word, but also in sung words and organ music. Even the second hymn had a reference to 'mighty waters' ebbing and flowing!

And how appropriate it was that **Canon Stockton's** prayers should include a special prayer for our new Bishop.

Afterwards producer Simon Vivian came to thank the musicians and clergy – and everyone burst into applause! **Well done, all!**