

## The Parish Church of St John-at-Hampstead

### Music Notes ~ April 2026

Like the previous version of our hymnbook, the *Revised English Hymnal* contains an extensive liturgical section at the back, with several settings of the Mass for congregational use and much plainsong and more modern chants. At the Good Friday Liturgy we shall use some items in the new book, the Veneration of the Cross, the Reproaches, and the Adoration of the Cross, *Crux fidelis*. Please make sure you ask for a melody copy if appropriate, since you will then be able to join in with all this. The choir will sing a separate piece on its own, the dramatic Good-Friday motet by Charles Gounod, *Le vendredi-saint*. The hymnbook can also be used on the Sunday after Easter for singing the Communion setting, since our usual option, by David Thorne, is one of those included in the book. Merbecke is also there, and perhaps we might use that on another occasion if people are keen.

For our service on Maundy Thursday we sing one of the most sumptuous of all Mass settings, the *Cantus Missae* in E flat by Josef Rheinberger. Several of his Masses are in our regular repertoire at Hampstead, but this is his only one for double choir. It was composed in 1878 and dedicated to the new Pope Leo XIII, after which Rheinberger was made a Knight of the Order of St Gregory (an honour recently bestowed on former Assistant Organist at Hampstead PC, Patrick Russill, who conducted *Rejoice in the Lamb* at the recent Sidwell anniversary concert). Our service of Tenebrae this year contains music from the classic set by the great Spaniard Victoria. The canticle Benedictus will be sung to the 'wandering tone', the *tonus peregrinus* (so-called because the second half of the reciting tone is on a different pitch to the first), and we will finish by singing the motet *Christus factus est pro nobis* by Anton Bruckner. Although he never received a Papal medal, Bruckner did at least become decorated with the Order of Franz Joseph by the Austrian Emperor in 1886.

Some Anglican musicians also receive recognition for their work, as exemplified by the composer of our Easter morning *Messe Solennelle*, Philip Moore. He spent much of his career as Organist at York Minster, and was awarded the Order of St William by the Archbishop of York on retirement in 2008, and in 2016 the Archbishop of Canterbury awarded him the Cranmer Award for Worship. He uses the title 'Messe Solennelle' in order to reflect his debt to the great French settings by composers such as Louis Vierne and Jean Langlais. The work was composed in 2024 and remains as yet unpublished, but Philip has kindly given permission for us to perform the work at Hampstead on Easter Day.

Two items being performed on the last Sunday in April deserve a mention. We've sung some music by the classical composer José M. Nunes Garcia before, but never a complete Mass setting, since most of his works were written with orchestra and are too lengthy for normal liturgical use. Garcia, of mixed Brazilian-African descent, was much admired by the King of Portugal after the court moved to Garcia's home city Rio de Janeiro. In 1809 he was made a Knight of the Order of Christ (a Portuguese order) and received a highly decorated tobacco box with a portrait of the King on ivory. Largely self-taught, his works often contain problematic passages if viewed through European eyes, making the task of the modern editor rather difficult. (Apologies in advance if my version takes too much away from the composer's wishes!) A rather different but equally challenging problem arises for the editor of the anthem *I am the resurrection and the life* by Orlando Gibbons. Sadly, two of the 6 vocal parts are missing, so they both have to be reconstructed. Fortunately, the great music scholar David Wulstan has done a brilliant job bringing this exquisite anthem back to life.

Geoffrey Webber

### Sunday 3rd May

Looking ahead to the start of May, it has been a pleasure to have been involved in choosing the music for the festive Evensong on Sunday 3rd, at which we celebrate the Diamond Weddings of Gill and Charles Perrin

and Anne and Handley Stevens. Music that means much to the two couples will feature in the service, notably the *Collegium Regale* canticles by Herbert Howells, reflecting Handley's education at King's College, Cambridge, as well as his membership of the Collegiate Singers which recorded all of Howells' liturgical music; and the so-called 'Bell' anthem with string accompaniment by Henry Purcell, *Rejoice in the Lord alway*, which Gill performed when at Oxford in the Chapel of New College, where Charles was a student and is now an Honorary Fellow. In addition, two unusual features may be noted. The first concerns the Introit, the delightful wedding anthem *Beati omnes* by Henry Purcell. This was composed for just four voices and *continuo*, but I have added some straightforward string parts to elevate the motet for the occasion, since we have a string quartet on hand for the anthem. Second, the service will feature an Office Hymn. Verses from George Herbert's poem 'The Elixir' are often sung as the hymn 'Teach me my God and King'. The standard tune, whilst pleasant in itself, does little to capture the complex mood of the poem, so I have composed something which attempts to do this, combining a standard feature of hymn tunes from Herbert's time, the juxtaposition of duple and triple rhythms, with some mysterious harmonies beneath the melody.

Geoffrey Webber