

ST.GEORGE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, JOHANNESBURG

MUSIC AT ST. GEORGE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

Introduction

Music plays a vital role in the worship and life of St. George's Anglican Church, Johannesburg. The musical life of this church is based upon the Anglican Choral tradition, as embodied in the Cathedrals , College Chapels, and larger Choral Foundations of Great Britain.

Our music is devoted to the glory of God in this beautiful church, which is itself one of the most famous architectural landmarks in the city. St. George's Church is a thriving Christian community which seeks to draw all people into a deeper relationship with God.

Choral Music

The Choir of St. George's comprises adult voices (men and women), numbering approximately 30 singers at full strength, and includes music students, professional people, and those with an innate musical ability.

The choral repertoire of the Choir ranges from Plainsong to the present day, and is modelled upon the standard Anglican Cathedral repertoire. We perform music by the Tudor masters, Byrd, Tallis, Gibbons, Campion, etc; through the restoration (Purcell, Wise); to eighteenth century composers such as Samuel Webbe, Jonathan Battishill, Samuel Arnold; and thus to the nineteenth century revival under S.S. Wesley, Charles Stanford, John Stainer, and into the twentieth century with Vaughan Williams, Walford Davies, Howells, Britten, Rubbra, Holst, Joubert, and Rutter, amongst others. We strongly support the commissioning and performance of new sacred music from contemporary composers.

The Choir sings a motet at each 9.00 Sunday morning **Eucharist**, as well as a Mass setting (in which the congregation will also usually sing).

On the first Sunday of the month, there will be full **Choral Evensong**, from the Book of Common Prayer, at 6.00pm, in which the Choir will sing an Introit, Psalm (to Anglican Chant), Responses, Evening Canticles, and an anthem.

Twice a year, the Choir of St. George's joins forces with the **Choir of Christ Church, Arcadia, Pretoria**, in singing Choral Evensong. One such service takes place at St. George's, and the second at Christ Church, each year.

During Lent, the Choir will also sing at the service of **Sung Compline** (which takes place at 6.00pm on each Sunday in Lent, other than the first Sunday of the month, when there is Choral Evensong as detailed above). During Sung Compline, the Choir will sing a setting of the Nunc Dimittis, a Psalm (to Anglican Chant), and a short anthem.

The Choir will also sing at the service of **Holy Eucharist** on Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday.

Generally speaking, when there is a fifth Sunday in the month, the 9.00 Sunday morning Mass will be a **Choral Holy Communion Service** from the Book of Common Prayer, and the Choir will sing a setting of the Holy Communion and a motet.

The Choir of St. George's also performs a **Choral Concert**, generally once a year. In 2013 we performed the *Requiem* by Gabriel Fauré with a quartet of visiting soloists from the Royal Academy of Music in London. In 2014, we performed the *Gloria* by Antonio Vivaldi, and the *Short Requiem* by Henry Walford Davies, also with visiting soloists.

St. George's is very active in supporting the work of the **Royal School of Church Music**, and frequently hosts choral and organ workshops, such as those given by Simon Lindley (Director of Music at Leeds Minster in England) in October 2014.

Given the importance of the new organ (see below) and the ambience of St. George's, a number of instrumental concerts are generally hosted each year by **visiting instrumental ensembles**.

In December 2014, the **St. George's Chamber Choir** was formed, with ten singers. This group gave a concert in aid of the Turning Point Home for Boys, a charity which is closely supported by the church and congregation at St. George's. The programme comprised Advent Music by Contemporary Composers, and included three works receiving their world premières.

The Organ

As a result of a very generous benefaction, St. George's had a new two manual *Rieger* organ installed in 2012 at the West end of the church.

The primary purpose of the organ is to accompany the musical worship of the church. Since its installation, the organ has led to a significant expansion of the quality and quantity of Choral music being performed at the church (see **Choral Music**, above).

It is also, of course, a magnificent solo instrument, in which capacity it can be heard after every service in an **Organ Voluntary**.

We also have a number of Organ recital series which serve to provide a basis for enjoyment of the new instrument for the congregation and visitors; a platform for younger South African organists to perform in public; and an opportunity for world-class celebrity organists to come to South Africa and play.

Thus, before Choral Evensong on the first Sunday of every month (apart from January), there is a 30 minute recital (the so-called '**Evensong' Recital**) given by a local organist. These recitals are free of charge. Those who have performed in this series include many excellent students of the instrument, as well as a number of the top professional players in the Johannesburg and Pretoria region.

In addition to the Evensong Recital Series, we occasionally have additional organ concerts on a **Saturday lunchtime or afternoon**, given by visiting South African organists.

The **Celebrity Organ Recital Series** usually mounts two or three concerts a year, in which a visiting, world-class, organist will be invited to play at St. George's. These events include wine and cheese after the recitals, and there is a ticket charge (currently R175 per head). Such luminaries as Olivier Latry, Clive Driskill-Smith, John Scott, Simon Lindley, and Martin Haselboeck have played to packed houses in this series.
