

President's Message December 2018

All the details of our AGM on Saturday 9th February can be found in this newsletter. You will see that the venue is St George's, Hanover Square, a welcome return after six years. Between all the necessary business of the meeting itself and the social and culinary pleasures of the eating-out afterwards, we shall be privileged to hear Ashley Wagner's recital. The St George's organ needs no introduction, but Ashley has known and loved it since early student days and this will show through in what is certain to be a memorable performance. Whilst still completing his final year at the Birmingham Conservatoire, Ashley has been appointed Assistant Head of Music at Birmingham Cathedral and he has our very best wishes as he leaves his Worcester organ scholarship to take up that prestigious post from this New Year. I am delighted to add that the Organ Scholar-elect for the next academic year (from Sept. 2019) at Worcester Cathedral is another EDOA member, Ben Markovic, whom we also congratulate.

Philip Norman's talk "Christmas Carols – what are they?" certainly lived up to expectations and we thank him for a most stimulating and entertaining presentation. As usual, he left us wanting more and we do hope that what Philip has to offer will feature regularly in our event planning. I also thank Philip Shrimpton for arranging for St Andrew's, Enfield to host us and Michael Hennin for his tremendous efforts with the publicity.

There are sure to be many reminders of the centenary of the Festival of the Nine Lessons and Carols and the fact that in 1918 Eric Milner-White, the new young Dean of King's College Cambridge, was inspired by the service devised back in 1880 for Christmas Eve in Truro by Bishop E.W. Benson. Interestingly, the use of "Once in royal David's city" as the opening item was introduced in 1919. The broadcasts began in 1928 (none in 1930), and thus the King's carol service has become world famous with an audience of millions. *Hyperion* has just issued, for download, "100 Years of Nine Lessons and Carols", giving a fascinating insight into how the singing of the King's Choir has evolved over six decades. One surprise from 1963, the Willcocks heyday, is in "Ding dong merrily" verse two, with "i-o i-o i-o" actually pronounced as in "eye-o" (but beautifully!) rather than to rhyme with "below". As well as thoroughly commending this timely recording, not least for its huge range and variety including some of the commissions synonymous with Stephen Cleobury's long tenure, I also draw your attention to a wonderful book just published: "I Saw Eternity the Other Night: King's College, Cambridge, and an English Singing Style" by Timothy Day. Put it on your Christmas list!

Once all the enjoyable but demanding efforts of celebrating Christmas begin to recede into the New Year, there is much to look forward to in addition to the EDOA AGM. In particular, don't forget the [Bloomsbury Organ Day](#), always on the last Saturday of January and always very special. The full programme is to be found online.

Best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

Terence Atkins