

London Church Music Forum
Wren Conference Suite and Music Department
St Paul's Cathedral
20th October 2007

Report

On October 20th around 65 musicians and clergy met at St Paul's Cathedral for the inaugural London Church Music Forum to start exploring the use and provision of music in churches in the London Diocese. During the day delegates heard some interesting and challenging presentations and took part in discussion groups. The proceedings commenced with prayers, a hymns and a talk from Michael Lawson, Archdeacon of Hampstead about the nature of worship and what it requires:

“Worship is a heart engagement of love, affection and gratitude in response to God who has made us and who has redeemed us by the cross (i.e. New Testament shorthand for the whole work of Jesus in the forgiveness of our sins and fitting us for glory)... we should use our gifts in worship to so honour him that we enrich and truly inspire our worshippers.”

Huw Williams, Organist and Asst Dir of Music of St Paul's Cathedral then spoke about the work of the church musician in the 21st century giving many practical ideas on planning, preparation and practice to sustain and develop our own talents and skills and inspire people who participate in choirs and music groups.

Mervyn Hogg, Project Manager for the LCMF, drawing on data from the 2005 survey of London's church music and the need for mission encouraged the delegates to:

- Provide music this fitting and directed to the glory of God.
- Have a willingness to explore and experiment to provide a style of worship that is in tune with the culture of each parish.
- Provide a range of inspirational and transforming services that appeal to the unchurched, encourage the de-churched to return and retain those already committed.
- Make best use of people's gifts and talents and invest in the development of the next generation of music leaders who will contribute to sustaining and spreading the Christian faith.
- Take the time and care to secure good and productive relationships between clergy and musicians that deliver high quality worship.

We need to re-energise and renew the vitality of music in worship in many of our parish churches. This was followed by series of discussion groups who were invited to address the question:

- *What Issues and challenges facing church music and musicians in London?*

Michael Lawson and Noel Trendinnick talked about the development of music at All Soul's, Langham Place, the creation of a music department that is able to draw on a wide range skilled people to form both singing groups and instrumental ensembles up to a full orchestra, the preparation of music for each weeks services and up to the major Proms Praise events. Contrast was also drawn between the traditions of classical music with its emphasis on performing the notes in the score versus modern worship music scores, which provide a starting point for enhancement and improvisation in performance.

Speakers from three organisations also talked about the training and opportunities that provide to support musicians. Nigel Groome from the RSCM described the recent RSCM reorganisation in London with its plans for a convention in 2008 and the development of Saturday training sessions for small groups who want to focus on organising a churches music, choir training and accompaniment. All of this is compliment by national courses and the “Voice for Life” programme for singers at all stages of development. Simon Williams from the RCO described the college's prestigious examinations and the introduction of a revised CertRCO with components specifically aimed at church musicians. He also introduced the St Giles International Organ School that offers tuition on a 1:1 basis with very experienced teachers, a junior organist's conservatoire and a programme of courses ranging from a full week in August to occasional Saturday sessions.

Finally David Peacock described the undergraduate programme in music and worship at the London School of Theology and the range of short courses offered by the school to support parish musicians. He also talked about the opportunities available to place students in parishes as part of their development.

After lunch the forum divided into Area –based groups to consider:

- *What are you going to do at the Area level?*
- *Who will help to take matters forward to the next stage?*
- *What support do you need from the Diocese and from Organisations?*

This was a very productive session with much enthusiasm and ideas to do more. The forum closed with prayers and final hymn.

Next steps are expected to include a website, an email newsletter and area-based meetings to help Musicians get connected to provide mutual support and exchange ideas for events, training and development. It is envisaged that these events will be delivered through the rich seam of musical resources and organisations that exist in London whilst the LCMF works in a 'lite' way to provide connectivity and the synergy of adding-up.

Our Thanks

To St Paul's Cathedral and the Diocese for hosting and sponsoring the forum. To Markson pianos for the loan of a piano. To our external speakers Noel Trendinnick, Nigel Groome, Simon Williams, David Peacock, To Rev Tom Cameron for sustaining the forum with excellent catering, To Brenda Barwick and Barbara Hogg for administrative support before and on the day.