



It would be a cardinal sin to miss this

St Jude's in Hampstead Garden Suburb will echo to the strains of 400-year-old music first played in the Sistine Chapel - alongside compositions from English composer John Tavener - when The Cardinal's Musick choir sings at the Proms

If there's one aspect of British musical life that's the envy of the world it's the emergence of an army of elite, small-scale professional choirs whose exploration of historic repertoire keeps bringing new discoveries to light.

Largely made up of former Oxbridge choral scholars, the membership of these choirs tends to overlap. But the best of them are still somehow distinctive, with a sound determined by the person in charge. And if you go to hear the magnificent Cardinal's Musick at the St Jude's Proms you'll notice something their director Andrew Carwood calls "a soloistic risk-taking in performance that makes us edgier, less smooth in sound than say The Sixteen or the Tallis Scholars but hopefully adds excitement.

"We're a group with large-ish voices that I encourage to sing out and go for expression in ways that can rock the ensemble but makes us strong on text, and strong on melody. That's what we go for".

Carwood is a man of many jobs - the main one being Director of Music at St Paul's Cathedral where his appointment eight years ago caused a stir in that he's a singer not an organist: the usual



■ The Cardinal's Musick picture: Dmitri Gutjahr

requirement for cathedral music posts.

It hasn't proved a problem: his eight years have worked out well. And he describes St Paul's as "an intensely creative

but extraordinarily demanding platform that turns you into an adrenaline junkie. It's one high-profile project after another, with events involving the royal family or the government on top of

the regular daily services. Plus concerts, plus tours. It never stops".

Outside St Paul's he maintains a separate life with The Cardinal's Musick - ancient spelling essential - which he founded 25 years ago

from a group of Oxbridge friends. Although the membership has fluctuated over time, there are still singers in the core ensemble of eight (extending to 40 when needed) who were there for the first concert in December 1989.

The focus was initially on early 16th Century English music by little-known figures like Nicholas Ludford and William Cornysh. But it shifted to the slightly later William Byrd and resulted in an award-winning set of 13 CDs of Byrd's Latin choral works, followed by a 14th disc of his Great Service in English.

That impressive output has ranked among the supreme achievements of the UK recording industry in the past 20 years or so, and is repertoire with which the group will always be associated.

But to St Jude's they're bringing something different: a snapshot of musical life at the Sistine Chapel in the 1620s (including Allegri's famous Miserere), alongside modern English music by the late, much-loved and missed John Tavener.

■ The programme runs 7.45pm, Friday 26th, at St Jude's Church, Hampstead Garden Suburb. Details: promsatstjudes.org.uk

Queen of Swing brings big band sound to proms



They call her the Queen of Swing, and she's played the St Jude's Proms before. But this time Clare Teal is back with her so-called Mini Big Band - which, as she explained to me "doesn't mean a group of very short people" but a reduced-scale version of the kind of '50s band that Ella Fitzgerald might have sung to. Serried rows of trumpets, saxophones and all.

"It's virtually impossible these days to tour with a real big band", says Teal, "so I use arrangements for a rhythm section and just four

brass. You get the same effect, of a sort of Hollywood style orchestra, but more compactly".

Arguably Britain's leading female jazz voice, Teal's career has taken her beyond the jazz-club circuit to considerably grander venues like the Albert Hall, where she played at the BBC Proms last year and will be back again this August.

Playing in a church will be a different proposition; and you might wonder how well a jazz programme delivers in that

environment. But she's used to it.

"You'd be surprised how often jazz musicians find themselves playing in churches. It's not usually a problem - although you have to be careful with the drums. Church acoustics can do funny things to them, the sound shoots off in strange directions. It's a nightmare for the sound engineers. But that's what they're there for".

■ Clare Teal at St Jude's June 27 7.45pm.

Flag waving last night concert

Not to be confused with that comparatively trifling event run by the BBC at the Albert Hall, the Last Night of the St Jude's Proms is a bit of flag-waving fun that follows the BBC's format pretty closely. Rule Britannia, Pomp & Circumstance and all.

And though it's not the sort of thing that conductor Howard Williams tends to do - he calls it a "refreshing change" to the more straight-laced repertoire that's driven his career - it won't be the first time he's ever led a Last Night.

"I did one of these things 20 years ago in, of all places, Rio de Janeiro where I'd been sent by the British Council to introduce Land of Hope and Glory to Brazilian audiences. I'm not sure the Brazilians understood what was going on, but there were British ex-pats in the audience too, so some people did actually stand up and sing like you're meant to".

At St Jude's the crowd won't need much encouragement to sing. But should they be shy, Williams is the man to get them going.

Long experienced in handling massed voices, he first started waving a stick at them during the 1970s when he worked at English National Opera. And on leaving ENO in the '80s, he was involved with some of the early London stagings of the then radical but now iconic Opera Factory, including a famously abrasive show of Birtwistle's Punch and Judy that

Williams recalls as "loud to the point of being unbearable, although that was what the director wanted".

He later became a champion of "challenging" contemporary English work: a very different take on Rule Britannia to the one he'll be adopting this weekend.

But by the 1990s his career path shifted towards Eastern Europe. He began to work with orchestras in Hungary, and still does. He can speak the language: an achievement in itself. And he'll be there again in a few weeks, playing a key role in the Bartok International Festival and Seminar, where he runs a course for young conductors.

Teaching stick technique together with the broader issues in conducting is a large part of his life now, working with both the Royal Academy and Royal College.

But another rather large part of his life is his relationship with soprano Emma Kirkby. Settled happily in Muswell Hill for what seems like eternity, they finally got married at the end of April - in a quiet ceremony that involved no music, only poems, and no honeymoon because the bride had concerts to perform.

This tragic lack of raucous celebration obviously needs remedying. Maybe the St Jude's Last Night can do it in arrears.

Williams conducts the London International Orchestra, violinist Vasko Vassilev, and the Choir of the 21st Century 7.45pm, Sunday 28th.