

Despite Covid, the sound of carols rings out

WE are now in Advent which means that Christmas will be with us shortly.

Here at Christ Church Cathedral School that means singing – lots of it – as our three choirs, those singing in the cathedral, in Worcester and in Pembroke, gear up to sing Advent and Christmas music.

This year, despite all the Covid difficulties, is no exception.

We have heard, in the school, the sound of Christmas carols ringing out from practice rooms and, in the case of the Cathedral Choir, services have continued throughout this term including during the lockdown when the choir has been able to livestream from an empty cathedral, attracting sizeable but dispersed congregations.

Sunday's Advent carol service attracted over 700 online congregants.

In a normal year, the cathedral would be packed for the Advent carol service, while for the Christmas carol service there would not be a seat spare and tickets are sought after as if they were made of gold.

This year, because of the live streaming, anybody who wishes to attend will be able to and I would strongly recommend so doing so.

Not only will you be able to attend but you

EDUCATING OXFORDSHIRE

Richard Murray
Headmaster - Christ
Church Cathedral
School, Oxford



In these difficult times, we must look to the positives and I hope that many of you will take advantage of this wonderful resource

will have a perfect view of the choir, readers and clergy.

Interestingly, there are advantages to singing in an empty building.

At our most busy services, the mass of people in the building change the quality of the sound as it is absorbed by the bodies of those attending.

It's as if someone has thrown a blanket over the choir, muffling the sound.

Sing in an empty building, on the other hand, and the sound is magnified gloriously by the echo, the chords exploding like fireworks in the roof spaces.

No one in their right mind would choose to have it this way, as gathering together is one of the central tenets of Christianity – Jesus's last act before his crucifixion was to gather together with his disciples in the Upper Room to share a meal – but, in these difficult times, we must look to the positives and I sincerely hope that many of you will take advantage of this wonderful resource.

Meanwhile, I also urge you to watch Songs of Praise this Sunday at 1.15pm. It features the finals of the Young Chorister of the Year Competition which this year features one of our former Cathedral Choristers, Alexander,

who is currently a pupil at Bedford School.

This is a national competition and Alexander has done magnificently well to reach the finals, a great credit to the many years of hard work he has put into his singing, the daily morning rehearsals at 8am in the mediaeval Chapter Parlour, the seven services a week in the cathedral – all these will have helped shape his incomparable voice and I will be fascinated to see how it compares to his competitors.

Here in Oxford, we can all take great pride in the fact that one of our own has reached the finals.

The choral music which is sung in our cathedrals and chapels is one of the greatest gems of English culture.

One of its strengths is that this tradition has always adapted as the years have passed.

Now, in this time of the coronavirus, it has adapted again. Let us sing praises that it is so!

- Christ Church Cathedral School is a pre-prep and preparatory school for boys
- Join the Christmas carol service by going to chch.ox.ac.uk/oxfords-cathedral/online-worship