

The members of celebrated Leeds-based chamber choir **St Peter's Singers** get the West Yorkshire music celebrations of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee Year off to fine style in early February. Along with the Choirs of Halifax Minster, Bradford Cathedral and Leeds Parish Church, a St Peter's Singers contingent of musicians will be at Halifax Minster on **Sunday 12 February** to participate in the county's special service **at 3.00 pm** marking the start of **Diamond Jubilee Year**. SPS conductor Dr Simon Lindley directs the music on this occasion, with Minster Director of Music Christopher Brown at the famous Harrison organ being joined by the Fanfare Trumpeters of the Royal Marines and the University of Huddersfield Brass Band – one of Britain's finest university ensembles, for many years under the direction of cornet virtuoso and conductor Phillip McCann.

The following day, on **Monday 13 February at 1.05 pm in Leeds Town Hall, St Peter's Singers** present a fabulous concert of English music for Choir and Organ headlined **Begin the Jubilee!** The programme includes celebrated works by Sir Hubert Parry – his 1902 Coronation Anthem *I was glad* and two of his evergreen *Songs of Farewell: Never weather beaten sail* and *My soul, there is a country far beyond the stars*.

Pride of place is, however, given to two magical works by West Riding born composers – Dr George Oldroyd, born 125 years ago in Healey, near Batley and Sir George Dyson, Halifax's most famous musical son [1883-1964].

Dr Oldroyd held significant posts in London as King Edward Professor of Music at the University of London and Organist and Choirmaster in turn of the Anglo-Catholic shrines of St Alban, Holborn and St Michael and All Angels, West Croydon. Oldroyd wrote his setting of *Jhesu Christ, Saynte Mary's Sone* – with the subtitle by which it is more generally known being *A Spiritual Rhapsody* – for the Croydon Festival exactly eighty years ago in 1931. The piece sets words by Hampole hermit Richard Rolle and is one of the neglected masterpieces of the English post-Edwardian period.

Sir George Dyson's *Hierusalem* was written precisely a quarter of a century after the Oldroyd work and is a setting of an 18th century English versification of the ancient Latin text *Urbs Hierusalem beata*. Dyson's composition was part of the Golden Jubilee celebration arranged in honour of Dr Harold Darke's fifty years' service at St Michael's Cornhill and the fabulous soprano solo part was written for, and first sung by, Isobel Baillie at the work's premiere – a concert that also included Ralph Vaughan Williams's *Vision of Aeroplanes*.

At the celebrated organ of Leeds Town Hall for this concert will be David Houlder, a prince of organ accompanists who worked for twenty years as Sub Organist at Liverpool Cathedral before moving to Leeds in 2003. David is the regular accompanist for St Peter's Singers and also for Halifax Choral Society. He is Organist and Associate Conductor of Doncaster Choral Society and Leeds College of Music Community Choral Society.

Soloists are St Peter's Singers principals Kristina James and Toby Ward is soprano and tenor roles respectively.

The concert lasts about one hour. Admission is free and a Retiring Collection will be taken.

The event is presented by Leeds City Council as part of the city's extensive programme of free lunchtime concerts promoted annually by Leeds International Concert Season.

St Peter's Singers conductor and Leeds City Organist Dr Simon Lindley, recalls

St Peter's Singers have performed the interesting, and rarely heard, works by Dr George Oldroyd and Sir George Dyson a number of times since the Choir's formation in 1977 but the pieces have never previously been given at Leeds Town Hall and the concert is already attracting a lot of local and national interest. Members of the Oldroyd and Dyson families have accepted invitations to be present. My own very long-standing connection with Halifax music-making [I gave my first concert there in 1969] are being happily strengthened by this auspicious occasion at the outset of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee Year.