

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY LUTON

**Music you know
and love**

Presented by members of

**LUTON
GIRLS CHOIR**

As a tribute to their FOUNDER and MUSICAL DIRECTOR

THE LATE

ARTHUR E. DAVIES M.B.E.

on

SATURDAY, 5th NOVEMBER 1977

at 7.30 p.m.

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

COLIN SMITH

SOUVENIR PROGRAMME — 25p



ARTHUR E. DAVIES M.B.E.

A NOTE OF EXPLANATION

by Richard R. Hopkins, C.B.E.

(Chairman of Luton Girls Choir Trust)

As recorded elsewhere in this programme, the Luton Girls Choir has a history running over 40 years. Inevitably, some people have asked — is this the end?

The answer is that tonight's event is planned to be the last — and this in deference to the wishes of the Choir members, past and present; and, in particular, Arthur Davies himself.

Those who have been close to the Choir over the years know that Arthur Davies and the Choir were indivisible. They always belonged together.

Not long before his last illness, Arthur Davies asked the Trustees to do what they could to protect the name of the "Luton Girls Choir" so that its unique association with him should not be broken when he might no longer be able to direct it.

The Trustees decided that the best way to do this was to remain in being, as a legal entity, for as long as might be necessary to safeguard the name of the Choir. This was in 1975.

When, in the following year, Arthur had to lay down his baton, he asked the Trustees to make a formal announcement to the effect that the Choir could no longer give concerts; and so it went into a state of "suspense".

After Arthur's death, it quickly became apparent that neither the Choir members, nor the Parents & Supporters Association, had any desire to continue under any other Musical Director and the Choir was virtually disbanded.

It is tragic in many ways that Arthur's health at no time permitted a suitable "Farewell Concert", but no one who heard the Choir members sing at his Funeral Service on June 8th can doubt the love and thanksgiving expressed in song on that inevitably sad occasion.

Tonight we meet in less sorrowful circumstances, and this Concert is both a Tribute and "Farewell" to Arthur Davies by as many members, recent and past, as could be brought together in a balanced ensemble.

The formal organisation of the Choir has been disbanded, so the work involved in this last Concert has been undertaken by a voluntary Committee representing almost every "era" of the Choir's existence — including, most characteristically, the ever-faithful Peggy Coggins.

It is my belief that Arthur would commend and appreciate what has been done and that he will be with us in spirit as we bring down the curtain on the work to which he dedicated so much of his life. And this we have tried to do with all the dignity and affection the occasion requires.

PROGRAMME

MARIE BIRCHENOUGH says "Good Evening"

March from "Tannhauser"

Wagner

"The Emperor Waltz"

Strauss

...

"Don't be Cross"

Carl Zeller

— ALISON NICOL —

...

"Down in the Forest"

Landon Ronald

"The Snow"

Elgar

...

"None, but the Lonely Heart"

— GILLIAN BUTTERWORTH —

Tchaikovsky

...

"Tales from the Vienna Woods"

Strauss

"My Heart is Singing"

Arthur Davies

...

"One Fine Day" (Madam Butterfly)

— SUSAN BISHOP —

Puccini

...

"Count Your Blessings"

Morgan

"The Lost Chord"

Sullivan

INTERVAL OF TEN MINUTES

"The Trumpet Voluntary"

Purcell

"Homing"

Teresa Del Riego

...

"Still as the Night"

— LYNDIA JANES —

Carl Bohm

...

"Fantasy on Nursery Rhymes"

Traditional
arr. Leslie Bell

Selection — "Carousel"

Rodgers &
Hammerstein

...

"O Love from Thy Power" (Samson & Delilah)

— MARY BROWN —

Saint Saens

...

"You are my Heart's Delight"

Soloist — DIANNE TOMPKINS —

Lehar

"My Heart and I"

Tauber

...

"Love and Music" (Tosca)

— JILL GIBSON —

Puccini

...

"Intermezzo"

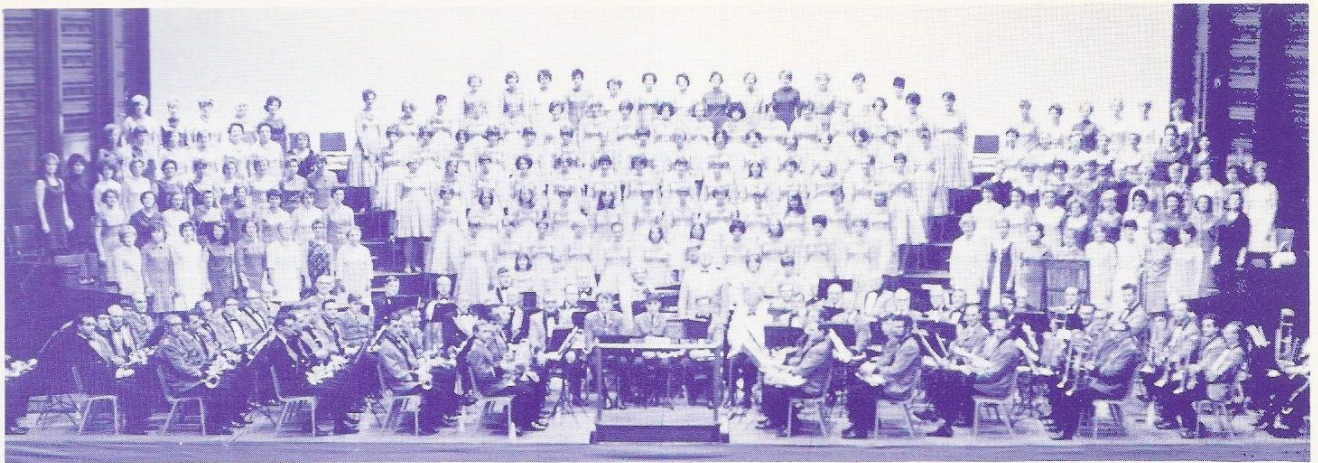
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"The Easter Hymn"

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Soloist — JUNE GASCOIGNE

Cavalleria Rusticana Mascagni



LUTON GIRLS CHOIR

"MUSIC THEIR HEART'S DELIGHT"

The Story of the Luton Girls Choir

In the world of music there are a few places and institutions whose names are internationally accepted and recognised. For instance, Covent Garden, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the 'Proms', Glyndebourne, are names with special connotations to music lovers.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Luton Girls Choir, in its own particular field of music-making, can claim that it had similar international recognition. There is no doubt that the Choir owed its phenomenal success to this singleness of purpose — making music for music's sake, with its members giving delight to themselves and countless people by their fresh, youthful beauty and charm.

The Choir's outstanding financial achievement can be reckoned in how much it raised for various charities and good causes, including a massive contribution of £12,000 for the National Children's Home. During its 39 years of singing and service it raised the magnificent sum of over £100,000 for various charities.

The concerts given by the Choir were always of the highest professional standard. Over the years there has been a glittering cavalcade of famous people in the world of entertainment who have performed with the Choir. Nothing was spared to maintain a high standard of appearance to match the quality of their music. Many of the members were schoolgirls who brought the charm and enthusiasm of youth to the performance.

Some people are under the false impression that the Choir was a professional organisation or that it had financial subsidies from the local authority or some other source. Both beliefs are without foundation; the girls did not take any payment; in fact they paid to belong to the Choir and sacrificed spare time and the company of friends.

The Choir travelled over 190,000 miles — including a sensational Australasian tour, and delighted millions all over the world via radio and television and by means of over fifty recordings. The proceeds of one record founded the Richard Tauber Scholarship which provides training for young singers chosen by national competition. The royalties from this record alone, amounting to £1,375, went to this fund.

The story of the Luton Girls Choir would not be complete without mention being made of one who throughout the 39 years, unseen and unknown to the countless audiences, gave whole-hearted co-operation and sacrificed the joys of home-life. Arthur Davies was the first to concede that without the unstinting support of his wife, Gwendoline, there would not have been a Luton Girls Choir, and to her a special tribute must be paid.

But the chief credit for the remarkable success must go to that dedicated man who was the Choir's founder, all-time Musical Director, philosopher and friend to all the girls, MR. ARTHUR E. DAVIES, M.B.E. He was decorated for his services to the Choir and music generally, was the subject of a famous Television programme, and ultimately made a Freeman of the Borough of Luton. Indeed it may well be said of this devoted man "ARTHUR DAVIES, THIS WAS YOUR LIFE".

Born and educated in Luton, COLIN SMITH spent four years studying at Trinity College of Music, London, during which time he won the Ricordi and Wilhelm Furtwangler Society Prizes for conducting and was a finalist in the John Halford Piano Competition. He was also privileged to take part in the Henry Wood Centenary Concert in 1969 under the late Sir John Barbirolli at the Royal Albert Hall.

As conductor of the Luton Symphony Orchestra he has worked with a number of famous musicians during the last few years and today frequently acts as accompanist for John Heddle Nash. He is conductor of the Ionian Singers, assistant conductor of Luton Choral Society, organist and choirmaster of St. Matthew's Church, Luton, and Director of Music at Challney High School for Boys. He is also the manager of the Bedfordshire County Youth Orchestra which is rapidly becoming one of the finest of its kind in Britain.

OUR SINCERE THANKS TO:—

The Rev. C.J. Mayfield and the P.C.C. of St. Mary's Parish Church.

The Rev. J.W. Morgan and the P.C.C. of St. Matthews Church for rehearsal facilities.

Miss Peggy Coggins, Secretary to A.E. Davies for many years, whose valuable help to the Committee has contributed greatly towards the success of this evening's concert.

Mr. Colin Smith, for all his patience at rehearsals.

Vauxhall Motors Recreation Club for the loan of staging.

Luton Borough Council Parks Department for floral arrangements

Stewards and Assistants

A final thanks must go to you, our audience, and to all those who have supported the Choir throughout its existence.

THANK YOU

It is requested that no private recordings should be made of this concert. An official cassette recording will be made and anybody wishing to obtain a copy at a cost of approximately £2.00 should send a stamped addressed envelope to the following address:—

Luton Girls Choir Recording
115 Pomfret Avenue,
Luton, Beds.