

Beginning of Spring term, 2022.

Dear Everyone

Happy New Year!

Headlines:

COVID news. Not much to add, other than we continue as we have been doing: cautious and adaptive. Please look out for COVID notices from the school as and when.

Rachael Williams our fantastic Music Administrator has landed a most prestigious post managing the music at Highgate School. An extraordinary opportunity for her, and well deserved. We will miss her enormously – we still have her for a few weeks yet.

It's not often that the New Year Honours list includes a close colleague and friend listed among the great and the good. And so it was with unbridled pleasure that the Cathedral's Director of Music Andrew Carwood's name sprung, like a neon light, from the pages of 'The Thunderer', recognised as he is for his services to choral music in his appointment as an MBE.

The olden days of reading such things in ironed newsprint while snuggled comfortably in a leather wing-backed chair somewhere in Pall Mall are of course long gone, but the idea of this being something special and of note, remains. These days, the announcements are swiftly telegraphed through social media.

Andrew's appointment is highly deserved, and comes at a crucial time for English Choral music. The appointment not only recognises Andrew's significant contribution to one of the rare qualities of transformative music and worship, but also as a signal that the English Choral tradition matters. It has an important place in the hearts of cathedral life, and not just in the UK, leading worship in times of celebration and tragedy. But in also creating a bedrock of some of the very finest musicians who continue to contribute to the arts and to our cultural lives in important ways, not least the contribution to our creative industries.

Andrew is worth celebrating, not just for his MBE, but every day. He is an award-winning singer and director of music in his own right. He is the co-founder and director of *The Cardinal's Musick*, with whom he has recorded extensively on the Hyperion label creating one of the great legacies of renaissance music reference works, and is highly regarded across the musical world. As the Cathedral's Director of Music, Andrew brings a clarity and precision to St Paul's that has been instrumental in making a choir of world standing. This is just the beginning.

As a fan of the radio, over the holiday I listened enthralled, and at times unsettled, to this year's Reith Lectures by Stuart Russell entitled, *Living with Artificial Intelligence*.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001216k>

The broadcast about AI and warfare is especially worrying. When asked what next, Russell alludes to the plot line in the latest Bond film as a plausible horror of potential reality. If you've not seen *No Time to Die*, I'll say no more.

Over supper with friends on New Year's Eve, the subject of AI came up. It is a frequent topic of conversation at home, not least because of my fascination with it. One of our friends works for one of the big media distribution networks, and made the point that as an organisation they are investing heavily in AI to automate what ought to be straightforward transactional processes in the administration of its business. The reality, they said, is that even more real humans are needed to clear up the mess AI makes.

That may be OK when playing with the administration of streaming TV shows about which celebrity got dumped by another celebrity, but not so funny if this stuff is organising the battlefield.

As the New Year dissipated into another January of cold wind and uncertainty, Dawn and I and Parker holed up in bungalow on the North Norfolk coast, the raging sea and frozen sand directly outside the window. At night, the sea is properly scary. Not just the noise, but its unpredictability, and the almost gothic terror of what it might bode. Years ago, Dawn spent several months in a 67-foot fibreglass hull, sodden and cold, ocean yacht racing. I asked what it was really like. She is, she says, more afraid of the power of fire than the power of the sea.

We're all afraid of something, and there is nothing more unsettling than that which we can't control. These last two years have made that even more acute. Perhaps: but we can choose to wear it lightly and continue to care for each other, and find the joy in the quotidian.

A teeth chattering and damp visit to Happisburgh (pronounced hayz-buh-ruh) brought a particularly joyful moment of discovery. In 2013 the sea storms had washed away the sand, and revealed footprints that are around 900,000 years old, and thought to be the earliest human presence in Britain. A small group of adults and children, walking across the mud flats.

We leave our imprint somewhere. I find that very comforting.

Wishing you joy and lightness for 2022, whatever it might throw at us.

And to start us off, rejoice, for here is Andrew Carwood MBE, conducting St Paul's Cathedral Choir with the choristers from cathedrals across Britain in Handel's *Zadok The Priest* (Coronation Anthem), recorded on the Decca label in St Paul's Cathedral and released in 2017.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89e_DrR-dkE

Simon