

MUSIC REPORT
SAINT MARY'S-IN-TUXEDO
JANURARY 2022

The word is “Covid 19”. As with everything else on planet earth right now, the virus disrupted the ongoingness of the music program at St. Mary’s as never before. And yet, as is often the case with setbacks, it has been a blessing in disguise. Coming back from the complete shutdown has been slow, but it has given us the opportunity to re-think and re-tool.

After the onslaught of the pandemic, I was left with one professional section leader, our soprano, Aileen Sager. I cannot thank her enough for helping to pull us through this challenging time. By good fortune, my colleague, the tenor Anthony Cinelli offered to come on board. Tony and I have worked together in the past and he certainly is a welcome addition to our music staff. We are now need to fill the alto and bass positions, and the word is out for those singers. Of course, it is important not to rush the process, but rather to find the right voices for balance and blend, and the right personalities to work smoothly together. It is challenging to find professional singers available at this time of year, and it may not be until the start of the choir season in September before we have our complete quartet in operation. None the less, we carry forward in thankfulness for the riches that we do have.

I am happy to report that William Dickinson, a baritone, will be joining us temporarily, until such time as we can secure a bass. For this I am very grateful.

My vision for weekly Sunday worship is one with a much richer musical offering. In the last parish in which I served, for each Sunday during the choral season, there was of course an offertory anthem, but also the professional quartet offered an a cappella choral introit for the back of the church before the processional hymn and a motet at Communion time. This is not uncommon in Anglican parishes with quality music programs, and it enhances worship is nothing else can. There is a vast body of choral repertoire that deserves to be offered at Saint Mary’s and, with a solid quartet in place, we will have the opportunity to make such music to the glory of God.

Several months ago, I had word that a church in Pennsylvania, which once had a vibrant music program, was in the process of merging with another church and divesting itself of a good portion of its choral library. I was able to get hold of a

contact person there, and make arrangements for me to visit the church and select anthems which would add greatly to St. Mary's choral library. I came away with a large treasure-trove of music, including the introit books I was planning to purchase. It amounts to several thousand dollars worth of music at today's prices, all given away for a modest donation from St. Mary's.

In closing, I want to offer my deepest gratitude to Alexandra Parker, who, at the end of this past year, made a magnanimous donation to our music program. Such generosity is rare and very great blessing indeed. This offering will help us to accomplish the goals I hope to reach, and much more, including the offering of occasional concerts and the continued hiring of instrumentalists for major feasts.

My thanks to all of you for your support of music at St. Mary's. I fell I love with this wonderful place many, many years ago, when I first came as a subtitle organist. Working together with Father Rick, look forward to greatly enriching the beauty of her musical life.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheldon Eldridge
Organist and Choirmaster