

Beauchamp Early Music Course 2018 – Angels and Ministers of Grace

On the Feedback form after this course I wrote: “*The venue is good, the food superb, the admin excellent, the music sublime, the tutors inspiring.*”. That says it all really, but I suppose I should supply a little more detail for those who know nothing about the Beauchamp Early Music Course. So let’s take those points in order.

Venue: Wotton House, home of Gloucestershire International School, seems to have proved the most successful of all the venues tried since leaving the original Beauchamp House. There are plenty of rehearsal rooms, a large performance Hall, bedrooms for those wishing to be resident and space for campers, pleasant gardens or a sun-room for relaxing, and the town centre is easily accessible.

Food: Jo Smart and her team keep us magnificently fed. She goes all out to provide interesting menus and every type of diet is individually catered for. Home-made biscuits at coffee time and home-made cakes for tea cater for any pangs of hunger one might feel between meals. There is also an informal bar run by one of the course members.

Admin: All aspects of the course are dealt with extremely efficiently by Anne Summers; no question is too trivial, and she replies to emails immediately. She and Jane Rothery were present throughout the Course to cope with any problems that might arise.

Music: The choice of music did not adhere strictly to the title of the Course, but Angels and Ministers of Grace provided a starting point. I shall mention just a few of the pieces we attempted:

Angelus ad pastores ait – H Praetorius

Dum complerentur dies Pentecostes – Melchior Vulpus

Angelus Domini descendit – Hans Leo Hassler

Serafin – Joan Cererols

Dialogo de Chori d’Angeli – Giovanni Croce

Instrumental works included *Giovanni Gabrieli (of course!) Sonata XVIII à 14 and Tibertio Massaino’s Canzon trigesimaterza per 8 tromboni*

We also made the most of the available resources and spent two tutti sessions working on *Alessandro Striggio’s Ecce beatam lucem à 40*, a wonderful experience.

Tutors: Philip Thorby and David Hatcher have established themselves as Director and Tutor of the Course, sharing responsibility for the Choir, the instrumentalists and the tutti sessions. This year Philip was unable to be present for the first few days, and we were very lucky that David Allinson happened to be free to step in at the last minute. Adam Staines joined us again as Assistant Tutor, and Richard (Dickie) Thomas spent two days as Guest Tutor inspiring the cornettists to greater heights. All the instrumentalists are allocated parts for each session and the tutors’ knowledge of each person’s ability and preferences never ceases to amaze me. The different personalities and styles of the tutors mean that one comes away from each rehearsal having learned or experienced something new.

If you are wondering whether the Beauchamp Course is for you, I can highly recommend it, and if you enrol by the end of January there is a 10% discount.