

Cambridge

Winchester Troper; 14th century manuscripts of Machaut and the earliest surviving motet with works in the English language set in the late 13th century.

All too soon, we had to move on and Andrew Morris beamed as we entered his old college, Pembroke. Before tea in the Waterhouse dining room, Andrew told us something of the long and distinguished history of the college, founded in 1347 by the Countess of Pembroke, and the third oldest in Cambridge. Across the court stands the College Chapel of 1663: the 31 year old Christopher Wren's 'opus 1'. Wren was nephew of the then Dean, and it was the present Dean who welcomed us in to the chapel. Seated collegiate style, the perfect proportions of the room with its sense of light and lift provided an especially fine venue for our first live music of the day – a concert by the young Sacconi String Quartet, recent winners of one of the prestigious Musicians' Company Maisie Lewis Concert platforms. The Sacconi took us through the drama of Beethoven's *Rasumovsky* quartet in a performance of colour, energy and dynamic range, perfectly judged for the scale and warm acoustic of the chapel.

The Chapel of King's College took over a century to build and was completed in 1547 –



Pembroke College Chapel

the glory of the fan vault (the largest of its kind in the world) and its stained glass (Old Testament scenes in the upper panels and New Testament scenes below) are well known. So we were grateful to Dr Emma Cleobury who gave us a tour pointing out some of the more unusual details including the poignant memorial chapel of All Souls and Wychcote Chapel with its striking prize-winning *Crucifixion* of 1994 by Craigie Aitchison.

The Choir, which sings daily services, is probably as well known as the College. And, we were to hear, with good reason as liveryman Stephen Cleobury conducted Evensong with music by Rachmaninov (some wonderful dark sounds melting in to the acoustics) and John Tavener's *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis*, the difficult treble line fearlessly and flawlessly accomplished by the boys.

It struck one as very Anglican to walk across the court for After-Evensong-Drinks in the Fellows' Wine Room. It provided an interesting opportunity to speak to the Choral Scholars who had just sung evensong and convey our thanks to the Cleoburys.

Last, although by no means least, we returned to Pembroke for a fine dinner, accompanied with fine wines, in the Old Library. Among our guests, it was especially

of his choral works. However, certain contemporary documents suggest that Bach typically used only one singer for each part which gives a lovely clarity of line and texture.

In later centuries it was fashionable to use large choirs and orchestras but less so in the latter part of the twentieth century, which brings us to 13 September in the twenty first century.

The Baroque Chamber Orchestra, led by Stephen Rouse, consisted of two violins, viola, two baroque oboes, oboe da caccia and (organ and 'cello) continuo. The instruments played were either original eighteenth century or copies of the originals.

Before the start of the performance we were treated to a few solo notes from the curved oboe da caccia to demonstrate its particularly beautiful sound.

There were four soloists who joined together singing the choruses, all their voices well attuned to the spirit of the music. The pitch chosen, a semitone lower than standard modern pitch, was that used by Bach in Leipzig, so we were transported back in time to enchanting effect.

Enchantment was complete with Jonathan Rennert playing his accompanying chords on the chamber organ in a subtle rhythmic and almost dance-like way.

With no conductor for the performance,

it was fascinating to observe the delicate, almost imperceptible, signals between performers that ensured perfect ensemble.

I cannot claim to have attended all nine of the previous cantatas with the Musicians' Company but each one has seemed more delightful than the last. We are all therefore most grateful to Andrew Morris, President of the Livery Club, for including this one in his programme for 2005. He also organised our stylish lunch afterwards in the splendid surroundings of Bakers' Hall nearby.

We can be sure that our tenth "anniversary" at St. Mary-at-Hill next year will be another distinguished occasion.

Liveryman Eugenie Maxwell



King David playing the harp, from the so-called Portiforium Oswaldi, from the Winchester Troper