

## Dei Gratia performance at King Charles Martyr Tunbridge Wells

Since Dei Gratia's inception, we have had two main strands of performance activity:

- performances of major works (*Messiah, John Passion*)
- chamber performances of excerpts from cantatas and passion settings with a chamber ensemble tailored to a particular venue/liturgical season/theme.

Before the pandemic, our main work was performances of the larger works and chamber performances which mainly happened once or twice a year (primarily during Advent). However during the pandemic, we were able to record several chamber performances covering repertoire for Lent and Easter which were well received, reaching a much wider audience than our live performances had been able to up till that point.

Post pandemic we have worked towards expanding our chamber repertoire in order to be able to reach smaller churches and communities. We always strive to bring a mix of the well-known and the lesser-known to these performances and interspersed the musical items with readings and talks to engage with the audiences.



Final preparations before the dress rehearsal

For our performance at King Charles Martyr we had been asked to put together a program celebrating Epiphany and 17<sup>th</sup> century repertoire to celebrate both the season in which the concert took place and the venue's historical connections. Like many smaller venues, the budget was limited. The support from the Angel Early Music Trust ensured that we were able to invite another violinist, allowing us to perform a more varied selection of repertoire. We were also able to provide everyone not just with a fee but with full travel expenses - and we were able to give everyone a slightly higher fee. The support also meant that we were able to invest in materials to produce matching folders for the ensemble with our ensemble logo.

The final program explored new repertoire to us as well as works we had performed previously. In celebration of the Epiphany season, we performed works starting with Maurice



Folders lined up



Planning meeting and rehearsal in progress

Green's setting of 'Behold I bring you Great Tidings' through Buxtehude's rarely performed setting of the *Nunc Dimittis* as well as arias, and duets by Telemann, J.S. Bach and Handel written for the feast-days following Christmas. We interspersed the vocal items with instrumental items by Buxtehude as well as Henry Purcell and Matthew Locke, who both had connections to the church in which we were performing. During a break in the dress rehearsal, we learned that Locke is mentioned on a plaque in the church, as he contributed towards the building funds. We included both readings and short introductions in our program, and it was great to have such a tangible connection to the venue to mention to the audience.

We thoroughly enjoyed performing in a fantastic venue to a warm and receptive audience. We were told that people have commented that our performance was expressive and moving – and that we won new fans of Buxtehude. We look forward to creating more unique programmes in the future and want to thank Angel Early Music Trust for the support which made our performance at King Charles Martyr possible.

Our next project is an Easter Program featuring arias and duos by the passions settings by J.S. Bach (*John* and *Matthew Passions*) G.F. Handel (*Brockes Passion*), C.P.E Bach (*John Passion*) and G.H. Stölzel (*Der gute Hirte*).