

ALL SAINTS CHURCH IN CLIFTON UNVEILS A PROGRAMME OF TOP MUSICAL EVENTS IN 2008

Plans for an ambitious programme of musical events in 2008 have been unveiled by All Saints Church in the Clifton area of Bristol.

Highlights include:

- ❑ Using the church's 40-year-old Walker organ to re-introduce an organ class as part of the annual Bristol Festival of Music Speech and Drama;
- ❑ A return visit by popular request of Russia's St Petersburg Blagovest Ensemble whose concert at All Saints in May, 2007 was a great success;
- ❑ Another concert by top international concert organist David Briggs whose improvisation on music to accompany Buster Keaton's silent movie *The Playhouse* proved a popular feature of his well-supported June, 2007 concert;
- ❑ A new series of monthly Saturday Matinee Concerts throughout the year.

Still under wraps are other plans to help extend the musical reputation of the active Pembroke Road church.

Re-built in 1967 following wartime bomb damage in 1940, the church has a strong musical tradition spanning 135 years and today it is popular with a growing congregation of all ages.

Graham Davies, director of music at All Saints, is keen to encourage more young people in Bristol to take an interest in playing the organ.

He says: "Good organists are hard to find these days, which is why I want more young people to learn to play 'the king of instruments.'

"The Bristol and District Organists Association is very supportive when it comes to providing grants to help young people learn to play the organ. I would like to see more schools listing the organ alongside the piano, violin and cello as options for pupils wanting to learn to play an instrument."

In a bid to do just that, Graham has persuaded the organisers of the annual Bristol Festival of Music Speech and Drama, which takes place in March, to re-introduce the organ class which lapsed some years ago.

During the non-competitive event on Saturday, March 8, players of any age will be able to perform on the All Saints organ and then benefit from one-to-one comments and advice from the distinguished local organist Dr John Marsh, a former director of music at two Bristol churches – St Mary Redcliffe and Lord Mayor’s Chapel – and a former member of the music staff at Clifton College.

This month sees the start of the 2008 series of Monthly Matinee Concerts at All Saints with a performance by the bass, Paul Fletcher, who is director of the city’s Albion Chambers.

Paul, who sang for ten years as a member of Bath Abbey Choir – with whom he made several recordings and broadcasts – today concentrates on oratorio and recital work.

Admission to the hour-long concert at 4 pm on Saturday, January 26, is free.

It will be followed by a retiring collection and refreshments.

Next month, on Saturday, February 23, the 4 pm Matinee Concert will be performed by Bristol-based concert pianist Steven Kings to celebrate completion of the restoration of the 100-year-old Broadwood grand piano at All Saints.

Steven Kings, who is recognised as one of the best accompanists in the region, has performed with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. He also works with the BBC National Chorus of Wales and Bristol Choral Society.

Other 2008 diary dates at All Saints are:

- ❑ Saturday, June 7, when a concert by New York based organist David Briggs – a former director of music at Gloucester Cathedral – will improvise a musical accompaniment to extracts from the 1927 Cecil B. de Mille silent film *King of Kings*;

- ❑ Saturday, April 19, when The St Petersburg Blagovest Ensemble will perform a concert of sacred and secular Russian music. The name Blagovest - which means 'good news' - was inspired by the ending 20 years ago of the censorship in Soviet Russia which had put a stop to the performance of Russian spiritual music since the 1917 revolution.

For more details of these and other musical events at All Saints Clifton in 2008 contact Graham Davies on telephone 01934 852252 or 07845 968025, email him at *graham.musicman@googlemail.com*