

TRIBUTE FROM KATHERINE DIENES-WILLIAMS

I was taught , encouraged and motivated by Peter as the Richard Prothero Organ Scholar at Wellington Cathedral. Here I was able to play the organ on a regular basis, accompany choral services, conduct the cathedral choir and indeed sing in it -something Peter insisted on as being essential to my understanding of what it was like to sing in a choir. He was a fastidious teacher, an encourager, a mentor, motivator and friend.

He encouraged me to turn my hand to composition, noting that there were few choral settings of Jesu dulcis memoria and he would like me to write one as homework. I had to write an essay on psalmody for him, a topic which I love to this day as being the beating heart of divine office. Psalm chants had to be memorised, hymns had to be played at the correct speed and the accompanist's responsibilities were laid out before me. These skills, so logical yet so vital were reinforced, repeated and perfected with gentle admonishment and encouragement but always a sense of fairness.

He allowed me opportunities to perform, and I remember a concert in Wainuiomata accompanying the cathedral choristers in the Vaughan Williams Christmas cantata Hodie. Afterwards Peter presented me with a vocal score autographed by Vaughan Williams, which I still cherish, especially as I live and work near the Vaughan Williams home. The benefits of whisky, a 2B pencil and the ability to make a decent cup of tea were also brought to life, together with gifts from Sheila of lemon curd, flowers from the garden and feijoas. Peter was of course not just my teacher, he had a profound influence on a huge number of people, young and old alike.

It came to me that Peter was not a person to ask why? But rather why not? Why should New Zealand not be brought to life chorally, educated musically, enthused about and encouraged? The New Zealand Choral Federation why not? Community choirs, cathedral choirs, organists, New Zealand composers, New Zealand singers on the world stage. Why not?

I am immensely grateful to him, and sorry I cannot be here today in person. But I will be brandishing my 2B pencil at a choir rehearsal and urging my choristers to give of their best, as I was taught to do.