

Before beginning this tribute, Derek Aviss, former Principal and now Executive Director of Trinity Laban has asked me to express his deep regret that he is unable to address you today and to inform you that Trinity Laban will be dedicating a performance of Haydn's Creation to celebrate James' life and work. The date for this will be confirmed shortly.

We are here to pay tribute to James, a wonderful friend colleague, musician and teacher. His musical and personal achievements along with his acts of kindness are too plentiful to state in full here today. Many of us will be connected with him, either as friends and family, or through his work as a professor of singing and conducting at Trinity College of Music, the London Orpheus Choir, Ealing Choral Society, the Croydon Philharmonic Choir, various orchestras and earlier in his career, the BBC Singers and the Royal Choral Society.

James was an inspiring musician. As a child, he learnt the piano and after a spell in the army he entered Trinity College of Music where he studied voice with Frank Titterton and piano with Gertrude Azulay.. He also took private lessons in piano accompaniment from Harold Craxton. He was a leading light as a student and he became the "Senior Student" – the equivalent of today's Presidency of the Student Union.

Charles Kennedy Scott (choral conductor and Professor of conducting at Trinity) and Sir Malcolm Sargent were both huge influences on his musical outlook. He held dear many of the approaches to performing practice current at that time. These sometimes contrast with some of the recent developments in the performance of, for instance, baroque music. I remember him once railing against the practice of some modern conductors to play Bach at top speed at all costs. James preferred to give the music time and space. Notwithstanding this, I remember clearly one performance of the St John Passion, given by the Ealing Choral Society in Ealing Abbey, which would have given some of the modern authentic exponents a real run for their money in terms of energy and drive.

As a conductor James undertook a huge breadth of repertoire, from pre-baroque to the present day. He conducted first performances of works by Antonin Tucapsy and Dame Elizabeth Maconchy. He has given first performances in England of the Donizetti Requiem and *Messa di Gloria e Credo*, performances of works by contemporary composers including Cecilia McDowell and has been a superb champion of much of the canon of choral music.

Whilst the main body of his performance work was as a conductor, James was an accomplished pianist with a particular gift for accompaniment.

James' performing, teaching and examining careers were inextricably linked. In all realms, his understanding of music, his ability to communicate this understanding and his great musicianship were keys to his success. As a professor at Trinity College of Music he taught singing, conducted the College Choir and gave conducting classes on the various diploma programmes. He was an exacting tutor of the highly selective College Vocal Ensemble which, through its high standards, was an excellent apprenticeship for professional work in groups such as the BBC Singers and the John Alldis Choir.

James was highly committed to all his students and was quick to spot and act as mentor to those with special talent. He would mentor pianists to accompany the choir and his demonstrations of choral accompaniments were a real testimony to his musicianship: often piano reductions are written such that only an octopus would have a chance of playing all the right notes. I'm reminded of the famous Morecambe and Wise sketch with Andre Previn where Morecambe, accused of botching the opening of the Grieg Piano Concerto tells Previn "You're mistaken, I'm playing all the right notes but in the wrong order". When James played impossible vocal scores, he played all the right notes, but in a re-arranged order much better suited to the capabilities of the instrument and making the music sound like a true orchestra. Only someone who

has intimate knowledge of musical structures and materials would be able to do this – it's a rare gift.

James taught some notable singing students imparting musicianship, musical knowledge, a deep understanding of poetry and text and wisdom. A good number of his students pursued professional careers and were invited by James to participate in his choral society work as soloists.

As a teacher, James was fair, patient, good humoured and exacting of his students. Later in life, I became better acquainted with James, as a colleague and more latterly along with Colin, as a friend. Colin and James have shown great kindness, not only to Nicholas Luff (who is playing the organ today) and I, and I know that this was a universal quality in all their relationships. Colin was a huge support to James in his life and of course, James was equally supportive of Colin. I'm sure that we will all wish to support Colin as and when he needs us. James was indeed, a truly inspirational figure and as I conclude, I think of the Shakespearian quote "If music be the food of love, play on" James' love for music and his irrepressible desire to pass this on to one, and all, will indeed be an inspiration for us to do just that: "play on".

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