

SINGER PROFILE

SEBASTIAN FENTON BASS 2

In our regular series of singer profiles, second bass Sebastian Fenton (pictured, middle, at a recent recording session), talks about his four years in The Bach Choir.

Sebastian began by admitting that he didn't always look forward to Monday rehearsals. "It's the beginning of the week and I have already had a long day at school – we teachers start our day quite early! But I have always been so glad that I've made the effort; I can leave any classroom concerns behind completely, and enjoy the challenges of singing, ending up feeling invigorated and energised."

Before becoming a primary school teacher, Sebastian was a freelance viola player and, listening in on a conversation during a rehearsal break one day, he heard people chatting about The Bach Choir. Such positive things were said about the high standard, exciting programmes, and once-weekly rehearsals finishing by 8.15pm, that he applied for an audition. Before that he had sung with the University of London Church Choir and as a student at the Royal College of Music under the watchful eye of Sir David Willcocks, the Choir's Musical Director for 38 years, and had enjoyed accompanying, orchestrally, many choral works.

"My favourite concert was Belshazzar's Feast – I felt that we really pulled it off. It was the concert soon after my Dad's death; I owe a lot to my Dad musically and I know he would have been thrilled by the performance."

As a teacher, Sebastian is very aware of the importance of the Choir's Outreach programme. "What a fantastic opportunity for primary-aged children to be involved in our summer concerts – this is something I am sure they will never forget. It is wonderful that their musical awareness is widened and, of course, that all



Katharine Richman

children have access to the programme, regardless of their academic ability or their background. I am looking forward very much to being able to contribute to an Outreach workshop myself later this month."

Much has been packed into Sebastian's four years with the Choir; he has taken part in recording sessions for CDs by Howells, Stanford and Dyson as well as backing for Alexander Armstrong's second album *Upon a Different Shore*; a major international tour to China and Hong Kong; and, of course, many concerts in a variety of London venues. "Performing the *St Matthew Passion* in Hong Kong was so exciting, and tours are a great way to get to know more members of the Choir."

"It's impossible to pick out just one highlight from my four years in the Choir, so I'm going to mention two. The most memorable concert was the performance of David Goode's *Blitz Requiem* at St Paul's Cathedral in September 2013. It was quite a major project and we spent a good deal of time rehearsing it. I will admit that I couldn't make head nor tail of it to start with, but it grew on me so much and I really enjoyed singing it, even though a throat bug meant that I had to bluff some of the higher notes in the performance! But my favourite concert was our recent performance of Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* (October 2016) – I felt that we really pulled it off. It was the concert soon after my Dad's death; I owe a lot to my Dad musically, and I know he would have been thrilled by the performance."

Katharine Richman