

Choir School NEWS

A NEWSLETTER FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS OF SAINT THOMAS CHOIR SCHOOL

SAINT THOMAS
CHOIR SCHOOL



DECEMBER 2022

Treble Tour to Illinois and Wisconsin October 5-10, 2022

TOUR REFLECTIONS

BY STEPHEN BUZARD
FORMER ACTING ORGANIST, SAINT THOMAS
CHURCH FIFTH AVENUE; DIRECTOR OF MUSIC,
ST. JAMES CATHEDRAL, CHICAGO

 Rehearsing with other guest choristers for
the Diocese of Chicago Treble Festival

I have dreamed of hosting the boys of Saint Thomas Choir School since I left New York for Chicago six years ago. Former Director of Admissions Victoria Vanasco and I made plans to bring the boys to St. James Cathedral in October of 2020, but like so many things, these plans were put on hold during the pandemic. At long last, our congregation was honored to host the boys on their first tour since 2019.

On Wednesday evening, the Choir School entourage arrived and made us their base of operations for the week. The boys rehearsed in the choir room, filling the cathedral buildings with the sound of their voices. The Saint Thomas habits and manners impressed everyone the boys encountered. Our receptionist told me the boys were polite and courteous, and one of our

TOUR REFLECTIONS *continued*

piano teachers said she had never seen children leave behind such tidy stacks of music!

Rather than simply host the boys for a concert, Dr. Filsell, Ruth Cobb, and I designed a more immersive experience for all. We invited choristers from throughout the region to join the Cathedral Choristers for a Treble Festival. On Saturday morning, these choristers worked with Dr. Filsell to prepare Sunday Evensong. About an hour into rehearsal, the boys from Saint Thomas joined in, electrifying the participants. Most of these children had never heard other choristers sing with such poise and skill, inspiring them to sing with new fervor.

Saturday evening, Dr. Filsell and the boys performed an incredible concert, putting the full extent of their skills on display. I was impressed at how Dr. Filsell treated the boys as full collaborators in music-making. Quite often, he left the conductor's stand to accompany them at the piano, allowing the boys to direct themselves. The most memorable selections of the evening were the instrumental solos which the boys played with a remarkable level of musical sensitivity for children of their age.

As marvelous as the concert was, Sunday afternoon's Evensong was the true magic! The Treble Festival participants joined the boys and the ATB from our Cathedral Choir to sing works of Hurford, Byrd,



⚠️ Clockwise from top left: Visiting Chicago's iconic *Cloud Gate* sculpture, aka "The Bean"; Enjoying the LEGO exhibit at the Museum of Science and Industry; Getting ready for concert night



⚠️ Full-group shots at Chicago's Millennium Park (above) and LaGuardia Airport (below)

Wood, and Hancock. Without a doubt, this was the largest group of singers I had heard since the pandemic began, and the singing made me mildly concerned for the structural integrity of our rafters! Fr. Turner gave an excellent and interactive sermon, encapsulating all the children had learned over the weekend. One of our choristers told her mom after the service, "I want to go back to church! I'm so sad it's over!"

This experience has already paid dividends at St. James. Our choristers are singing with a new level of enthusiasm and seriousness. Whenever I need them to step up and sing more boldly or behave more professionally, I ask them to remember the boys of Saint Thomas. For a weekend, our choristers got a taste of what life could be like at the Choir School. I hope that some of the boys hunger for more, and that their families will call the admissions department in the months ahead. What a joy to see these two worlds come together to worship God and inspire each other!



our destination, for the plane had broken down and delayed us by two hours, but we finally went to Chicago!

At first, we had to go to church and have an hour and a half of rehearsal. When rehearsal ended, we went to Millennium Park and saw "The Bean." It was huge! The bean had a mirror kind of reflection so you could see yourself in different ways. After the park, we had dinner with some of the St. James choristers. We had pizza and cookies for dessert. After the dinner, we got to the hotel and figured out who our roommates were.

The next day it was time for the concert. I was really scared, but after the concert I was proud of my accomplishments. When we got back to school we were very tired and excited at the same time that we were back. If I were you I would go to Chicago.

TOUR REFLECTIONS

BY CHRISTIAN G.
SEVENTH GRADE STUDENT

On October 5, 2022 our whole school went on the Chicago tour. Imagine a whole group of kids really excited racing down the stairs trying not to trample each other. When we finally got to the airport, everyone was sort of having mixed emotions. Some people were nervous about their solo or the concert in general (that was me) and others were just really excited to get to Chicago and go to a new town. It took a while to get into the plane to get to



Open House and Chorister for a Day

On Sunday, October 23, we were thrilled to welcome six families to our Open House and Chorister for a Day event. Visiting boys in grades 2–6 had the opportunity to sit in on rehearsal with the choir and join them in singing Evensong, while their families toured the school and met our faculty and staff. Afterward, participants were presented with certificates acknowledging their participation. It was a joy to introduce these families to our school, and many have already taken the next steps in the admissions process! Many thanks to the six boys and their families for joining us, and to our faculty and staff for opening their classrooms on a Sunday afternoon.

⚠️ Dr. Filsell poses with some of our Choristers for a Day

Alumni Notes

On the last night of the Treble Tour, **ANDREW YOW '14**

and **IAN FISHER '95** joined us for Evensong and dinner. It was a treat to see them! Our thanks to Ian for his generous support of St. James Cathedral, which helped to make this tour possible.

Alumni, we want to hear from you! Send *your* news and updated contact information to alumni@choirschool.org.

Calendar of Events

All events take place at Saint Thomas Church.

The Advent season is always a busy one here at the Choir School! We would love to see you at one of the many services and concerts the boys will sing in the month of December. Please see below for their complete schedule. For more information and concert tickets, please visit www.saintthomaschurch.org.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27

First Sunday of Advent

11am Litany and Solemn Eucharist
4pm An Advent Procession

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29

5:30pm An Advent Procession

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4

Second Sunday of Advent

11am Solemn Eucharist
4pm Solemn Evensong

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6

7:30pm Concert: Handel's *Messiah*

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8

7:30pm Concert: Handel's *Messiah*

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11

Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete)

11am Festal Eucharist
4pm Festal Evensong

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13

5:30pm Choral Evensong

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14

12pm A Service of *Christmas Lessons and Carols*

THURSDAY DECEMBER 15

5:30-6:30pm Concert: *Christmas on Fifth Avenue*

SUNDAY DECEMBER 18

Fourth Sunday of Advent

11am Solemn Eucharist
4pm *A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols*

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20

5:30pm A Service of *Christmas Lessons and Carols*

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21

Feast of Saint Thomas

5:30pm Solemn Eucharist

SATURDAY DECEMBER 24

Christmas Eve

4pm *A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols*
10:30pm Procession and Solemn Eucharist of the Nativity

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25

Christmas Day

11am Procession and Solemn Eucharist of the Nativity




Contact Us

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Connect

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Do you know a boy
who loves to sing?
www.choirschool.org

Saint Thomas Church
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