



FROM: Adrian Partington – Artistic Patron, Huddersfield Bach Collegium
TO: Chorus Members, Soloists, Instrumentalists & Philanthropists
DATE: September 2016



It isn't every day that one of the UK's outstanding gospel choral directors telephones you to discuss the prospect of training to become a conductor of classical music – but that was the first contact that I had with Alexander Douglas and I have been delighted to see how far he has come since that time and the entire range of his choral directing oeuvre has expanded in some very exciting ways. When he told me that he was going to set up a project to direct all 198 sacred cantatas of J.S. Bach – the Huddersfield Bach Collegium – and asked if I would serve as their Artistic Patron, I was delighted to accept. He has overcome some very significant challenges in both life and music (not least as a conducting student!) and as a leader of both people in general and music in particular he is now very well placed to take a community of singers and instrumentalists on what I trust will be an exciting and historic journey!

I share Alexander's concern that this wonderful baroque sacred music is increasingly becoming the preserve of specialist players and listeners. However, with his background in both gospel music and jazz he is no dyed-in-the-wool Bach interpreter; he wants this music to live and breathe and I would strongly encourage musicians and singers from Huddersfield and the surrounding regions to take the opportunity to explore some of this incredible repertoire with the HBC. Bach is not just for the 'professionals' – this music belongs to everyone, and it will be Alexander's job to lead all of you in such a way that it becomes 'yours' while still being faithful to Bach's intentions (inasmuch as those can be ascertained!).

As a community-based enterprise, the Huddersfield Bach Collegium is also going to need a considerable amount of financial support in order to operate. The fact that ADM Productions does not want to charge the listeners for entry and that they hope to take the project into a variety of different buildings and share the music whilst building relations with as diverse a range of people as possible is something to be celebrated and also supported, so I would also appeal to all those philanthropically-inclined supporters of classical music and the arts in general (whether you are in Yorkshire or not) to back Alexander and his business partner, Katie Musgrove, so that they can subvert the now clichéd paradigm of music-and-diversity (which always seems to emphasise 'urban' music at the expense of almost every other genre) and gradually take Bach's music to a more diverse audience than is often the case. The fact that they will be having monthly performances means that they will need a considerable cast of instrumentalists, soloists and chorus members in order to rotate personnel and their desire to integrate professional music-makers with talented and enthusiastic amateur music-makers into a special musical community in which Bach's music joins everyone together is an example of a vision that really does deserve to have all the resources that it needs in order to be realised.

This is going to be a very special musical and cultural journey for Huddersfield. Please take my best wishes as you go and I look forward to hearing you all at work in due course.

Artistic Director, BBC National Chorus of Wales; Director of Music, Gloucester Cathedral; Grammy Award nominee

