

Okumenische Kantorei sang "The Peace in Nantwich on V.E. Day.

It was a difficult decision to make to go to England to spend the weekend of the V.E. Day celebrations, the day on which the Second World War ended, and take part in a very full programme. English, French and American flags met our eyes everywhere. Would Germans be particularly welcome? These were the feelings of the members of the Okumenische Kantorei who visited their English twin town at the weekend. The arrival made all of these worries melt away. Waving and laughter from our host families met us at the end of our long bus journey.

But there was little rest: the Kantorei had said that it would take part in a concert with the Nantwich Choral Society and also that it would perform items during a religious service. That meant a lot of hard rehearsing. The leader of the Kantorei, Hans-Joachim Steinbruck, said during the rehearsal that all his hopes of a successful debut had dwindled.

The English choir began to sing and their voices made a mighty ringing sound! How could the 36 singers of the Kantorei compete?

Apprehensions of this kind haunted them during the concert. Both choirs had chosen pieces on the theme of peace, reconciliation and hope. The Nantwich Choral Society had chosen two long pieces by Edgar Bainton and Gerald Finzi, while the Kantorei sang "Locus Iste" by Anton Bruckner, the Gloria and Sanctus from Schubert's German Mass, also "Lobe den Herren" and "Verleih uns Frieden" by Hugo Distler, without accompaniment.

With them the Kantorei showed that they had nothing to be ashamed of in their performance. On the contrary, they made such an impression with their short pieces that the audience applauded spontaneously. Then came the high point of the concert. The Requiem, by Daniel Faure, was sung by both choirs with Fiona Vaughan, soprano, and David Campbell, baritone.

The service of celebration for 50 years of peace probably surpassed everyone's expectations. The congregation poured into the church long before the service and so that all the congregation could be seated chairs had to be tucked into every odd corner. Representatives of the various Veterans Organizations followed close behind them led by a band and carrying their standards. They took their places in the church.

In the sermon and intercessions the Rev. Gordon Geddes spoke of the necessity of being reconciled with each other and said that the day should not be celebrated as one of victory over Germany but as a day of thanksgiving for 50 years of peace.

With this service the official part of the celebrations ended and the social part began. After an evening meal in which all joined, Steinbruck, in his witty style, gave thanks to the host families for the cordial reception during the joint exercise. His use of the word "fruitful" assured the cheerfulness of the return journey.

Completely overtired from their strenuous programme, the choir took their leave for the homeward journey. All were agreed: this was surely not the last time that the Kantorei and the Nantwich Choral Society would give a concert together.