



A Tribute to Gavin Williams – In Loving Memory

(30 October 1942 – 17 May 2015)

Rochester Choral Society: Assistant Director of Music and Chorus Master

Gavin Williams studied piano, organ and composition at the Royal Academy of Music from 1961 to 1964 passing FRCO, GRSM, LRAM and ARCM. He had already passed ARCO at 17 years of age, while still at school. He was awarded the organ scholarship at Pembroke College, Oxford, but was subsequently denied financial assistance by the Local Authority. After a further year at the RAM, studying orchestral conducting with Maurice Miles, and conducting several concerts with the Academy musicians, Gavin was appointed sub-organist of Guildford Cathedral in 1965.

With the cathedral choir under Barry Rose, Gavin made over a dozen records with international recording companies (later issued as CDs), and was awarded two gold discs and one platinum disc. At that time the Guildford Cathedral Choir was one of the finest choirs in the country, and Gavin accompanied it throughout the UK, including King's College Chapel, Cambridge.

Gavin moved to Rochester as Director of Music at King's School in 1970, and immediately founded the professional orchestra, Orchestra Roffensis, with whom he has given concerts with many leading international soloists, including John Ogdon, John Lill and Robert Cohen. Under his direction the King's School Choir toured most of the English cathedrals, and achieved exceptionally high standards.

During his time at King's School, almost all the organ scholars won organ scholarships to Oxford or Cambridge and nearly 20 choral, organ or instrumental scholarships to Oxbridge were awarded. Innumerable pupils went on to university or music college to study music and become professional musicians. Gavin also taught mathematics and coached cricket, rugby and hockey. He retired in 2005 and devoted more time to playing the piano and organ, as well as serving as a magistrate on the North Kent Bench and helping Rochester Choral Society at short notice with rehearsals.

Gavin joined Rochester Choral Society in 2006, as Assistant Director of Music under its Director, Roger Sayer. He became 'de facto' chorus master when Roger became very heavily committed elsewhere. More recently Gavin worked with our current Director of Music, Scott Farrell. Gavin supported and encouraged us through many pieces of music over the years. His passion and enthusiasm for music shone through and inspired the Choir's love for the piece, however challenging! We were privileged to sing a chorus from Brahms Requiem at Gavin's funeral; a piece that we knew was very special to him.

As accompanist his ability to unravel complex piano renditions and multiple vocal parts was outstanding. As well as being a talented musician, Gavin was a truly gentle man and great friend and he will be sadly missed by us all.