

BROADLY SPEAKING

Our man behind the gates, **Richard Jordan-Baker**, shares life living at Broadlands



The 4th movement of Camille Saint-Saëns' *Organ Symphony*, Allegri's *Miserere*, *Salvator Mundi* by Thomas Tallis, Leo Delibes' *Flower Duet* from *Lakmé* and Ralph Vaughan Williams' *English Folk Song Suite* were the pieces I chose when asked by a dear friend to suggest 'glorious and uplifting' music to help her through an important time.

I was delighted to help and, quite by accident, the list included a mix of opera, classical, sacred and a hint of folk. It was the same friend, who, earlier, with her husband-to-be, asked me to help choose the music for her wedding and, later, for the christenings of her children. I am sure she could have asked a dozen people so it was a pleasure to be asked. Few things are more fulfilling than sharing what you know, especially when what you shared others then like too.

Sometimes we all get an itch. If it's an itch that needs a GP appointment, then good luck with that! I mean a mental itch, an itch that keeps recurring, an itch that won't go away, an itch that keeps telling you to do something. I have had such an itch since January 2019 when, at the tea and buns following my father's memorial service that I had organised, a girl I'd grown up with came over to me and said that she had never been to such a wonderful memorial service, nor heard such a moving eulogy, and would I help her with her mother's funeral when the time came? I drove home saying little as my mind was whirring. Then, at my mother's memorial service, another friend said a similar thing. Next, I organised the music for another friend's wedding last summer. Then, back to paragraph number one at the top, and the story is complete.

So, in January, I moved to a four-day week at Broadlands and launched RJB Services – my own business. A service providing advice and help with music for any event or occasion. It might be a wedding or party, a church or crematorium service but could also be for any occasion where there needs to be music whether recorded or performed – a reception, a corporate event or your own private recital?

I constantly talk to people who love and appreciate all kinds of music and would like to have music as part of what they are planning, but just don't know what the music is that they like or how to go about making it happen. As a boy I was a chorister in Lincoln Cathedral, later, at school, sang in the chapel choir, have sung in several choral societies and worked for a time for a classical record company. Our shelves are laden with hundreds of records and CDs. As an aside, this is preserving our culture and heritage – not hoarding.



Richard in 1979 when head chorister of Lincoln Cathedral

A musical interlude

How many times have we all been to a wedding or a funeral and inwardly groaned on opening the order of service to find what lays ahead for the next 40-or-so minutes is just the same as the last time we were at a similar occasion? *Love Divine* and *Praise my Soul* at the wedding; at the funeral, *The Lord is my Shepherd* and a eulogy for the dearly departed that reads like a CV so that at the end we know that Beryl went to Crawley Grammar School, worked for the Gas Board and shortly after marrying George had Clarissa and Gavin, but very little more. It seems such a shame. Surely Beryl deserves something more profound, more elegant, more personal? So, by the way, does George!

So I'm also offering eulogy and speech-writing for those who are daunted by the thought of standing in front of an audience for the first time, who don't want to use AI but instead want to be real, authentic and go some way to conquer their anxiety and nerves by having some personal support. For my branding I have chosen a depiction of St Cecilia, the patron saint of musicians and poets, in stained glass designed by Pre-Raphaelite master, Edward Burne-Jones and made by the firm founded by William Morris.

Returning to my very first paragraph, my friend had the most beautiful baby girl.

Broadlands this month, for me and many of the staff, is all about preparing for the very worst with disaster and emergency planning. The greatest fears are twofold – fire and flood. Are we prepared? As I write, we are not as prepared as we should be, hence the 'big push' in February. There will be a revision of all our plans including checking all our emergency kit, familiarisation of the house and its contents for the non-house staff, liaison with the fire service and training in salvage. How do large paintings come down from the walls? What is the best way to carry sculpture and what are the priority items?

The fire at Notre-Dame has proved to be a valuable lesson in emergency planning. The keys to one of the most important treasures was in the pocket of a verger who had gone shopping when the fire began. We can and must all learn from each other.

As I write it is the last knockings of Christmas so the glass has Madeira in it. The book was a Christmas present, *No Dig* by Charles Dowding – 'Nurture your soil to grow better veg with less effort.' What could be more perfect? ●