

People News **Vicky Meets**



# 'In Chichester I heard angels sing'

**Edward Milward-Oliver and Emma-Jane Wyatt**  
Bernstein in Chichester

In 1965, Leonard Bernstein heard his *Chichester Psalms* performed in the cathedral and recalled the event thus: 'In Chichester I heard angels sing.'

Appropriate, therefore, that this Saturday voices including those of the City Angels will ring out from the Assembly Rooms.

"Songfest is a thank-you from the community to volunteers," explained Edward Milward-Oliver who, together with Emma-Jane Wyatt, founded the Bernstein in Chichester Festival to celebrate the links between the city and the world-famous composer on the centenary of his birth.

Explaining that *West Side Story's* composer was not only a multi-award-winning musical genius but also a teacher and social activist, Edward said: "We have invited volunteers of City Angels, Stonepillow, Chichester District Foodbank, the

Four Streets Project and St Wilfrid's Hospice for an evening of singing Bernstein's music, led by choral leader Emily Barden. It's going to be a lot of fun."

And, while the great man's centenary is being celebrated on six continents, in Chichester the year-long festival is a response by the community to Bernstein's local links.

"He attended the performance of the *Chichester Psalms* with his family," said Edward, recalling how Walter Hussey, then Dean of Chichester, had written to Bernstein asking him to compose a new choral work.

Agreeing, the Bernstein family visited the city to hear the work performed.

Mr and Mrs Bernstein were billeted at The Deanery and their children stayed with the Elwes family at West Stoke.

"It dawned on me that Bernstein had actually been here and that it had obviously made a real impact on him," said Emma-Jane, a classical music agent.

"The *Chichester Psalms* is



Edward Milward-Oliver and Emma-Jane Wyatt

a hugely important piece of work and a unique gem - it is the only piece of his music that lists the name of a city in its title."

With a shared passion for Bernstein and complementary skills (Edward's background is

in entertainment and media), the Chichester-based pair have assembled a thrilling programme of concerts, ballet, workshops, talks, film, exhibitions and more, with participants including the cathedral, the Festival

Theatre, the University, Pallant House Gallery, Prebendal School, Chichester Chamber Concerts, Chichester International Film Festival, Chichester Jazz Club, and the West Sussex Record Office, along with leading

figures in the arts and noted Bernstein authorities.

"Most people know *West Side Story* but there's so much more," Emma-Jane said, highlighting the performance of the *Chichester Psalms* as part of a programme in the cathedral by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of Bernstein protégée Marin Alsop.

"Leonard Bernstein's son Alexander is coming and we will reunite him with Richard Elwes, now one of our trustees and with whose family Alexander stayed as a boy. The power of music to bring people is incredible," said Edward.

Nodding, Emma-Jane added: "The festival is even reconnecting choristers and lay clerks who sang in the original performance!"

Bernstein in Chichester is supported by George Ide LLP, The University of Chichester, Chichester City Council, Harbour Hotels, Naxos Records and private donors.

For further information visit [www.bernsteinchichester.uk](http://www.bernsteinchichester.uk)