**29 June 2024 – BMEMF workshop with tutor David Hatcher.**

**Christoph Straus: *Missa concertata in echo***

**Bishopswood Village Hall, Kerne Bridge, near Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 5QT**

The music

The Hapsburg imperial court in Vienna at the end of the 16th and early 17th centuries was one of the most opulent in Europe. Emperor Ferdinand II, who reigned from 1619 until 1637, was an avid Italophile and appointed a large number of Italian composers to his court, including the Venetian Giovanni Priuli as his Kapellmeister.

During Priuli’s governance, the native Viennese composer Christoph Straus was somewhat sidelined, having formerly held the senior post only to be replaced by the Italian. Nevertheless, he continued as master of the music at one of Vienna’s principal places of worship, the magnificent St Stephen’s Cathedral, where he produced a large number of the typically grand compositions associated with this most grandiose court.

Ferdinand employed around one hundred and twenty musicians (the majority of whom were Italians) and the Italian style of the likes of the Gabrielis and Monteverdi in Venice was embraced and magnified. Polychoral works, sometimes with six or more choirs, obligato parts for virtuoso instrumentalists, fine attention to the rhythm of the text and an operatic use of dialogue were all commonly exploited.

Straus’s sacred music was published in two volumes. The first appeared in 1613 and presented thirty-six motets in five to ten parts, with instrumental parts but no continuo. His second volume, published in the year of his death in 1631, contains sixteen sumptuous mass settings, which clearly demonstrate his superlative skills as a contrapuntalist and composer of imagination and depth. Four of the masses are described “Concertata” - that is, they include parts for specific instruments - and it is in them that Straus demonstrates his most innovative and groundbreaking techniques.

The subject of our workshop, the *Missa concertata in echo*, is one such work. It is scored for two SATB choirs, with parts for violins, cornetti, trombones, violone and organ continuo. We shall also welcome all other members of the violin or viol family and players of other late 16th and early 17th century instruments, such as recorders, curtals, oboes, lutes and harpsichord.

This will be a rare opportunity to explore a large-scale work of this composer, one typical of the style of mass settings from the incredibly lavish seat of Hapsburg power.

The tutor

David Hatcher’s career as a player of the viola da gamba, Baroque cello and renaissance wind instruments takes him around the globe and sees him playing and recording with a wide range of period orchestras and ensembles. He is a founder member of The Linarol Consort of Viols, the only UK consort specialising in the earliest repertoire of that instrument. Closer to home, David now lives in Leominster and is well-known to many of us through his work with Border Voices and The New Titley Philharmonic Orchestra (aka the Titley Phil). He is a very popular tutor on early music courses and at workshops, not least the many that he has directed for BMEMF. See David’s website for a fuller picture: [www.dhatcher.co.uk](http://www.dhatcher.co.uk)

The venue

Bishopswood Village Hall is located a few miles south of Ross-on-Wye, on the B4234, just south of Kerne Bridge.  It is spacious and light, has parking and good facilities and is in a beautiful situation on the eastern bank of the river Wye, with lovely picnic areas nearby.  There is a separate room where instrumentalists can store their cases etc. See [www.bvhonline.co.uk](http://www.bvhonline.co.uk)

(NB – this is not Bishop’s Wood in Shropshire! It is not unknown for people to turn up at the wrong one…)