

Those Who Hope

Eltham musical prodigy Tom Bridges has won the honours in a competition to produce a choral work for the Olympics.

Beating off 20 competitors, Tom, of Grangehill Road, won £1,000 prize, with £500 for his school, in the competition which was organised by Eltham Choral Society.

The short-listed three works were performed by the Society at its summer concert and judged by leading choral composer John Rutter, who wrote a Royal Anthem for the wedding of Kate and William, Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

Mr Rutter said that Tom's ten minute work showed 'a sense of purpose and seriousness of intent' which had its own 'voice'. Tom, who is a talented linguist, had translated a biblical text into French, under the title *Qui Autem Sperant* ('Those Who Hope') which Mr Rutter said had been an ingenious solution and sounded 'poetic'. The work had been in the genre of French choral composition and was worthy of publication, he said.

Tom, who is 17, attends St Olave's Grammar School in Orpington and plays the organ at St Luke's Church in Westmount Road, as well as being a member of ECS himself.

He is taking his A-levels and hopes to win a place at the prestigious Royal College of Music to study composition.

It is his second competition success, having won the 'Woodard Schools' contest last year with a work which was performed at their anniversary concert at Westminster Abbey.

Tom said that he composed the work on a computer programme which simulates a choral performance as it is written; he plans to spend his prize money on a more advanced system,



called *Sibelius*, which will aid his future work.

He said: "It took about three days. Once I had found a text which inspired me, it just flowed."

The competition was aimed at encouraging young musicians and had been an idea of the Society from when the Games were awarded to London in 2007. The other two short-listed composers were Sarah Mees, 16, who attends Dover College, and Murray Ashdown, 15, who attends Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar.

Mr Rutter was presented by choir member Pam Fanshawe with a picture of Westminster Abbey done by her husband George.

As well as performing the three competition works, the Society's 100-strong choir gave a stirring rendition of one of Karl Jenkins' most popular pieces 'The Armed Man', accompanied by members of the Amadeus Orchestra. The dramatic atmosphere created during a precise and varied performance demonstrated the progress which the choir has made under director Peter Asprey and organist Charles Andrew.

Their next concert will be a 'centenary concert' at Christ Church on October 6 when the programme will include works by Vivaldi, Parry and Bruckner.

Eltham Choral Society meet every Thursday at St Luke's Church, Westmount Road
New members welcome
 7.30pm www.elthamchoral.org.uk