



FRIENDS NEWS

Issue 10 January 2020



FROM THE CO- CHAIRS

Dear Friends

There is a growing sense of momentum within HCS.

Amy and I took on the role of joint Chair knowing that we would have to grasp opportunities that would arise. We have a desire and ambition that the choir shape its own future, by reacting to events with positivity, by viewing inevitable vicissitudes as opportunities.

By far and away the most significant current event, that we anticipated from the start we would have to respond to, is the announcement by our greatly esteemed Deputy Choral Director, Marilynne Davies, that she will be standing down from her role at the end of this, the 2019/2020 season.



There will be a time and an opportunity for us all to pay tribute to, and to thank, Marilynne for all that she has done for HCS.

For the moment, we will simply place on record our gratitude for Marilynne's unlikely ever to be equalled contribution to HCS. It has been truly immense. We are hopelessly indebted to her.

In the meantime, appropriately, much thought has already gone into how we move forward. It wouldn't be right to speak in any detail here and now but we assure you that we are planning ahead. Opportunities now presenting themselves will be maximised. The notion of harnessing the best of the future whilst treasuring and preserving the best of the past is hardly original, but it is apposite.

Amy and I are very excited by the future, and hugely optimistic.

We hope that this Newsletter enables you to share in the joy and the colour that being part of HCS affords us all.

Very best wishes
Paul and Amy

PLANNED CONCERT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Date	Venue	Work / notes
28 March 20	Royal Hall	Rossini – <i>Stabat Mater</i> and Puccini – <i>Messa di Gloria</i>
27 June 20	Harrogate Convention Centre	Collaborative Gala Proms concert with HSO and other local singers
31 October 20	Royal Hall	Brahms – <i>Ave Maria, Alto Rhapsody and Ein Deutsches Requiem</i>
5 December 20	Harrogate Convention Centre	The Harrogate Christmas Concert
12 December 20	Royal Hall	Handel - <i>Messiah</i>
6 March 21	Royal Hall	An Evening of Schubert and Haydn
19 June 21	Royal Hall	Will Todd – <i>Mass in Blue</i> & Chilcott – <i>Little Jazz Mass</i>

COMMITTEE REPORT

The following is a summary of items discussed by the Executive and full Committee - we have not had a full Committee meeting since the last newsletter but the Executive have met so there are a few items to report. As always if there is anything you think we should be discussing please let Ruth know.

Feed back on recent events

Messiah at Tennants went very well with an almost full house and everyone enjoyed the ambience of the venue. We will consider a future concert there at some point. Local audience members have already asked whether we will be returning.

Rossini and Puccini Concert

As this will be the last concert of our own this season (the concert in June being a joint one with HSO) we will hold a reception beforehand. Ideally this will be on an Italian theme so we will be approaching local Italian restaurants to see if they would like to either make donations for the reception whilst taking up HCS – related publicity options. The Mayor of our Italian twin town, Montecatini Term, is to be invited.

Future developments

After many years as Deputy Music Director Marilynne Davies has taken the decision to retire with effect from the end of the current season. The Committee will be considering the way forward as it will be very difficult to replace Marilynne who has given hours of her time, often unpaid, to HCS. The discussions will include various other ideas for the development of HCS. The choir's gratitude to Marilynne for all she has done will be recognised.

Fundraising

Although we have been most fortunate in receiving generous sponsorship for several years which has enabled us to put on four major concerts each season and support other small charities we must remember that we ourselves are a charity and as such we should be putting more effort into fundraising for ourselves. We do raise monies from monthly cake stalls and book sales and from Gift Aid but we should really be doing more. We need to consider what we can do. Kate Rogata has considerable experience in this area and presented on the subject to the Executive at their last meeting.

CONCERT BOOKING FOR THE NEXT TWO CONCERTS

HARROGATE CHORAL SOCIETY
Andrew Padmore, Conductor

ROSSINI
STABAT MATER
&
PUCCINI
MESSA DI GLORIA

Manchester Camerata
Sarah Power, Soprano
Adriana Pesteu, Mezzo
Alex Banfield, Tenor
Stephen Gadd, Bass

Royal Hall, Harrogate
28 March 2020, 7.30 pm

Tickets £15 to £20

Students or IBA £5
Under 16s free when accompanied by an adult
from Harrogate Box Office 01423 502116
or online at www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk

www.harrogatechoral.org.uk | Registered Charity 1184776 | [Twitter.com/HarrogateChoral](https://twitter.com/HarrogateChoral)

Tickets for Rossini *Stabat Mater*
& Puccini *Messa di Gloria*
In the Royal Hall
at 7.30pm on 28th March 2020

are on sale from the Harrogate Box Office tel 01423 502116
or online at

<https://www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk/whats-on/Rossini-and-Puccini>

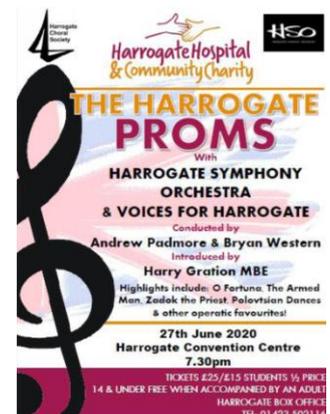
or by contacting the HCS ticket team
at tickets@harrogatechoral.org.uk

Tickets for The Harrogate Proms
Special Fundraising Concert
In Harrogate Convention Centre
at 7.30pm on 27th June 2020

are on sale from the Harrogate Box Office tel 01423 502116
or online at

<https://www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk/whats-on/The-Harrogate-Proms>

or by contacting the HCS ticket team
at tickets@harrogatechoral.org.uk



REVIEW OF HANDEL – MESSIAH

A near capacity audience enjoyed a well constructed and uplifting performance of Handel's Messiah on Sunday evening in the Garden Rooms at Tennants. The sumptuous setting provided a comfortable venue, particularly on such a cold and wet evening.



The popular conductor Andrew Padmore moulded the 100 strong choral group with care, energetically directing the Amici Ensemble, with David Francis' Harpsichord continuo throughout the performance enabling the choir and soloists to present this wonderful work to such an appreciative audience.

Performances throughout by soloists Bibi Heal (Soprano), Beth Mackay (Mezzo-Soprano) and Phil Wilcox (Bass-Baritone) contributed much to the evening. It was a particular delight to hear the fresh clear tone of the young Tenor, James Micklethwaite, a soloist who is sure to be in demand in the future. He sensitively set the scene in the opening Recitative, Comfort ye, Comfort ye my People, with expressive gentle control.

The voice parts were not in sections but dispersed, a challenge for all. There were occasional entry inconsistencies, but the text was projected with clarity and care with detailed phrasing and attention to dynamic contrasts and the resulting rhythmic energy and direction made for a performance with purpose, enjoyed by performers and listeners alike.

As the work progressed, this accomplished Harrogate Choral Society responded to their conductor in building positive ensemble technique and purpose to the chorus The Lord Gave the Word, a rich and full Hallelujah, and the final chorus, Worthy is the Lamb that was Slain.

The enthusiastic and well deserved applause from the audience proved that they had experienced a most moving and enjoyable evening!

Stanley J Roocroft MBE

A Few Audience Comments

"...the most exciting and moving performance of Messiah I've ever heard"

"...really impressive"

"transfixed throughout"

"alive and vibrant"

"an excellent performance"

"blend, balance and clarity of diction were excellent"

A DAY OUT TO LEYBURN

Our Messiah was an exciting new experience this year. We were at Tennants in Leyburn, performing on a Sunday but not in voice parts.

A concert day is usually heralded by a force nine gale with rain, although on this occasion we had hail thrown in for good measure. I walked from the Skipton Road borders (Duchy Road borders to grander souls) to Trinity Church in a record 22 minutes. I bounded onto one of the coaches and attacked my lunch-time sandwich, worried about the timing of the next meal (a constant concern). Some people had blatantly ignored Ruth's instructions to notify her of their arrival. (I later explained that it was "complicated").

The driver took us on a delightful scenic route via Ripon and Masham. I always think the countryside looks beautiful whatever the season or weather, and even better perched high up on a coach. It was fascinating crossing the river Ure many times and admiring the many old bridges.

Tennants is very smart and spacious with manicured front lawns and no litter. Gill and her team greeted us at the door and we were ushered upstairs to our green room. Those first in bagged places by a wall, but a brave soprano set up camp in the centre and was soon joined by others-a clear leader. The building is awash with "facilities" or "euphemisms" as I prefer (Anglican cathedrals and churches please note).

We then assembled in the concert hall where the Amici were rehearsing, sounding like a real Baroque orchestra. We arranged ourselves on the stage, mixing ourselves up where we could. We had been assured this improved the sound. Apparently this is because you can hear all voice parts much better. However, I think it is also because we have to pull our own weight especially if we are next to very good singers, which I inevitably am. Marilynne did one of her official prowls during the rehearsal ostensibly to check the sound from different angles, but with the whispered conversations with Andrew, clearly reporting on those misbehaving or not looking up.

At the rehearsal's conclusion Andrew asked if there were any problems. I heard the patrician tones of Bruce Noble. "Can Charles Nightingale move into the centre?". I had no idea what Charles Nightingale had done. Dawn and I were getting on famously and she had not complained about my top E's, although some did not quite make it, I felt. Bruce is considerably bigger than me so I did not argue. There was a brief prisoner exchange and I settled humbly into my new quarters.

A very tasty meal had been laid on for us. The main item was fish pie. While this is a delightful dish it is a devil to make, messy, time-consuming and infuriating. I once had a major fall-out with some capers. Seconds were on offer and I could have managed thirds. Small mince pies were available, one per person. I watched my table carefully. Paul, thankfully, ate elsewhere, otherwise there would have been some nonsense again about sharing my fish pie with someone. Sharing?

Before the concert began we had time to admire the charming bronze animal sculptures, destined for auction. The concert itself was very well attended and the room was packed. It was lovely to see Liz Latter in the second row. The Amici was on great form as were our four young soloists. When they were singing on their own I sneaked a look at the audience. They were completely absorbed, gazing intently at the singers, with many turned in their seats to get a better view.

The Messiah is of course an inspiring work. But it is a tough sing and requires stamina. The semi-quaver passages, taken at break-neck speed, are a challenge. But the whole performance, in a lovely new setting, was a very uplifting occasion. It was a memorable day and I hope we will be able to repeat it in some form in the future.

Charles Nightingale

CAROL SINGING AT HAREWOOD



Following the highly successful carol concert at Harewood some three years ago, HCS was asked once more by the events team there to provide a small choir to perform on a Sunday afternoon in the build-up to Christmas.

This is a lovely experience, for singers and those supporting them, and judging from the many positive comments received, for the audience.



As last time, there were two separate performances. First in the Courtyard, happily the weather was clement, and thereafter in the beautiful Long Gallery.



The audience isn't static. In the Courtyard people are coming and going, whilst in the Long Gallery the visitors are filing past slowly as they enjoy the festive ambience of the beautiful rooms, enhanced yet further by Christmas decorations and the intimacy of winter lighting. Many break off from their perambulation and stay to listen to more.

A wide selection of well-known carols was sung, Marilynne conducting, with accompaniment on the Clavinova provided by David Ward Campbell, to whom we are grateful.

I conducted the leafleting, always worthwhile carrying out at Harewood where there is in the course of an afternoon an impressive number of visitors.

My thanks to Allison Bond for her sterling assistance in distributing leaflets, and to Anna Thornhill (and family) for transporting and setting up the Clavinova.

Thanks as ever to Marilynne and of course to the singers. I hope and believe that we will continue to receive invitations to perform in this wonderful setting.

Paul



A FEW PHOTOS FROM THE CHRISTMAS CONCERT

On 15th December 2019 singers from Harrogate Choral joined Harrogate Symphony Orchestra and about 300 Primary School children for the wonderful community event – The Harrogate Christmas Concert. It was, as always, a great success and here are a few photos, noting that Reindeer on the Roof involves actions as well as singing – and this year the audience joined in when we sang it as an encore!

Marilynne conducting HCS



an overview



Another overview



Bryan Western (HSO) conducting



Bryan with the main man!



Reindeer on the Roof!!!



CANDLES FOR HEROES

A Christmas vigil for our war dead, Sunday 22 December 2019

The year 2018 marked the hundredth anniversary of the end of the Great War. As well as many other events to mark this centenary, a Christmas act of remembrance was set up to mark the sacrifice of the many Commonwealth war dead from both world wars at the Stonefall Cemetery on Wetherby Road in Harrogate. This event, the brainchild of Benji Walker and planned in association with CWGC (Commonwealth War Graves Commission), involved the laying of flowers and lighted candles on each of the Commonwealth war graves, and was followed by a service of remembrance at the Stonefall monument.



A mutual friend had got in touch and asked whether I might provide some appropriate seasonal music for the inaugural event? As time was short for the putting together of a group of singers, I sang solo during the candlelighting ceremony, and after the Service, addresses and prayers, followed the Last Post and One Minute's Silence with Abide with Me.

The first event was a fully appropriate and moving occasion even as far as the seasonal weather and the fading evening light, and as had been the intention from the start, the next of an annual series of events was planned for Sunday 22 December 2019. There was more time to plan this occasion and we assembled a small willing band of singers while I chose a collection of carols. Our numbers were seven; Fiona Young, Monika Sabor, Margaret Knight, Janet and Stephen Murdoch, Peter Stretton and myself.

This year the service was held an hour earlier than in 2018 and the weather was dry, if cold and markedly muddy underfoot! We grouped ourselves close to the centre of the ranks of war graves and after a welcome from Benji, the candlelighting began as we accompanied quietly. Though we'd prepared ten carols to sing, only five were required before we all assembled for the service, where after the Last Post and Abide with Me, we were addressed by the Mayor of Harrogate, the Air and Sea Cadets, and the head of the Harrogate branch of CWGC. After prayers we closed the service with We Wish You a Merry Christmas - followed by a swift departure by Peter and me as we were then singing at Pannal's Carol Service!

The occasion was a very moving and reflective one, and it is wholly appropriate at Christmas to remember those who fought for the freedom we enjoy. It also brought to my attention the work of the CWGC, largely staffed by volunteers, who look after Commonwealth war graves in cemeteries around the world. My thanks to them, to those who came out to pay their respects on Sunday, to our hardy faithful bunch of singers, and to Benji for setting up an event which I hope continues for many generations to come.

Daniel Hutton (Bass 1)

MEN'S OPEN REHEARSAL

An Open Rehearsal for Men was held on Saturday 18th January at The Balcony, Harrogate Cricket Club.

Dee Walsh and Paul Jackson, the Trustees responsible for membership issues, were delighted at the obvious desire to promote our choir that was exhibited by our existing Tenors and Basses, who turned out in force.

It was an enjoyable and convivial event in a great venue. The reaction from the guests who attended was very positive indeed. We have attracted new members, some immediately, others over the next few months as they balance pre-existing commitments.

Many thanks were owed to Andrew who did a great job in providing an entertaining and engaging workshop, ably supported as ever by Tom. Dee and Paul were grateful to their fellow Trustees, Amy and Kate, to Anna Thornhill the new members' Mentor and to Sally Jackson, Louise Dexter and Janet Murdoch for their support. Kathy Carr, our Press Officer, secured excellent local press coverage of the event.

The sun shone throughout, joyous weather which matched perfectly the atmosphere of the event. The Balcony is a bright, modern environment with great facilities. We provided a buffet lunch, the bar was open throughout, the whole event was light and relaxed and as well as helping with recruitment it afforded the opportunity for our Tenors and Basses to meet up outside regular choir hours.

Great fun. A memorable event.

This Newsletter

If there is more you would like to read in this newsletter, or you would like to tell us a bit about yourself then do let us know by getting in touch with Carolyn, the Friends Secretary – email

friends@harrogatechoral.org.uk