



FROM THE CO- CHAIRS

Dear Friends

Sadly, large choirs like ours have been particularly badly affected by Covid. We can for now neither perform in any viable manner, nor rehearse together in any completely meaningful way. It seems unlikely that we will be able to do so until at least late Spring of 2021. We are keeping a close eye on developments. We tried to explore as far as is possible the limited options for rehearsal together, but the restrictions continue to change and like our choral colleagues elsewhere we have recognised the inevitable and suspended our 2020/2021 Season.



The view of HCS members, following a recent sounding, seems to be overwhelmingly in favour of putting off any attempts at live rehearsals for the moment. Covid is advancing, not retreating, and it is felt that we must accept that some sacrifices must be made for the public good. Singing together is very important, but other issues are paramount at the moment.

When we do return we will have a new Deputy Director, namely our accompanist Tom Moore. He will be taking up his new position jointly with Marilynne Davies until her retirement. We are delighted that Tom has accepted the Deputy Directorial position. He has already become, and will continue to be, a great asset to HCS.

Andrew Padmore is leaving us, as most of you will already be aware. Andrew leaves, after fifteen successful years, with our sincere thanks and good wishes. We have achieved much under his leadership. He is also to be congratulated on being awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the Guild of Music, which we are sure is well deserved. We understand that he is implementing a staged retirement plan.

Our President, and very good friend of HCS, Brian Kay, has very kindly agreed to assist with regard to our recruitment of a worthy successor to Andrew, and has offered to conduct. He will be conducting our December 2021 Messiah. We look forward very much to rehearsing and performing again with Brian.

We have much to look forward to, and Amy and I are both excited and very confident about the future for HCS. This difficult period for all of us continues and we have to accept perhaps that priorities other than performing together must prevail. We hope that everyone is keeping safe and well, and as ever we welcome your thoughts and observations.

Finally, might we repeat again our offer to help anyone who requires assistance, whether it's with shopping or anything else, during these increasingly restrictive times. We're happy to help. Likewise if anyone simply fancies a chat, please call.

Very Best Wishes

Paul 07801 735696 & Amy 07825 134918

BOX OFFICE UPDATE

As most of you know by now the rearranged Rossini and Puccini concert can no longer take place on 31st October. The Box Office staff/ our own ticket sales team should by now have made contact to offer either a refund or the opportunity to donate the money you have spent on tickets to support Harrogate Theatre through this difficult time. If you have not had such contact please do let the HCS ticket team know, you can contact them at tickets@harrogatechoral.org.uk

Many thanks to those who have already donated their money to the theatre.



COMMITTEE REPORT

The following is a summary of items discussed by the Executive and full Committee since the last newsletter, being April 2020. A lot has happened in that time and meetings have been held in May and September. The Exec have also met. As mentioned in the last newsletter if there is anything you think we should be discussing at a future meeting please let Ruth know.

Admin matters

All policies are up to date and various other matters contained in our Action plan just cannot happen at the moment due to the uncertainties caused by the pandemic.

Membership Matters

We have continued to receive queries about membership despite the lockdown and there are three potential new basses who are keen to join us once rehearsals can recommence. Online rehearsal material continues to be supplied by Andrew, supplemented by Midi files from Robert and this is updated every Wednesday for members to learn the music at home – currently working on the Brahms Requiem, Alto Rhapsody and Ave Maria plus looking back at other works. Further investigative work on actually singing together online will be carried out as that is what most people really want.

Appointments

The Trustees approached Music Director Andrew with a proposition that would have guaranteed him improved terms, future tenure for three years, but notifying him that as part of the ongoing management of the Society we felt we should be forward planning for the next ten/fifteen years and the plan was therefore to start advertising for someone to take over as MD in three years time. If a successor were not identified by that time then Andrew's contract would revert to its current annually renewing basis until such time as a successor were to be appointed. Andrew decided however to leave now and will retire from HCS at the end of December 2020. Work is underway to identify his replacement. The intention remains make another long term appointment.

Following the retirement notice from Marilynne some months ago, Tom Moore, our Accompanist, has been interviewed and appointed as the new Deputy Music Director. Marilynne has extended her retirement date due to the pandemic and she and Tom will work together until December 2021 at which point she will step down.

Future Concerts

After some discussion it was agreed that as, in addition to national Covid restrictions, the Royal Hall itself is not available for any of the next three planned concerts, we should suspend our Season 20/21. We will contact them and ask that our bookings (and paid deposits) should be rolled forward into the 2021-22 season. If things improve and we are allowed to rehearse again during the current season we will try to arrange a small concert in somewhere like St Wilfrids Church. Discussions are ongoing with the Royal Hall and other parties but it is likely that the first concert of the 2021-22 season will be Brahms (including the Requiem) on 13th November, followed by the Christmas concert on 4th December and Messiah on 11th December. Then on 19th March 2022 we will (fingers crossed) finally perform the Rossini and Puccini concert - with all the original soloists! This will be followed by a concert on 18th June 2022, content to be decided.

Finance

We currently have very little expenditure and we have suspended payment of subscriptions, but as some members had asked if they could pay their subscriptions anyway the information on how to do so and how much to pay has been added to the members page of the website. Current expenditure is mainly linked to paying Andrew, until December 2020, to paying Tom and possibly some music hire costs for future concerts. We have already paid deposits for future Royal Hall bookings.

WHAT WE DID IN LOCKDOWN!

We may not have been able to rehearse but members of the choir kept themselves busy. Along with many other people across the country some of our members embarked on some baking

From Christine (Alto 1) "What to do in lockdown? Yes, there was plenty needed doing in the garden, but as a keen baker I thought I would tackle Sourdough bread. What could possibly go wrong? After four weeks of trying to get the sourdough starter to become active and bubble I was ready to throw in the oven gloves. Son-in-law who is a chef sent me various links to sourdough sites and urged me to carry on. I am so pleased I did and now bake my own sourdough regularly and have even gifted loaves to friends and neighbours."



Sheila (Alto 2) known to Members for her fundraising book sales was busy making some fantastic cakes for various socially distanced birthdays.



Aren't they wonderful



Kate (Soprano 2), one of our Trustees, is also Director of the charity "Supporting Older People".



When Boris announced lockdown SOP realised they could no longer be a face to face befriending service, nor were most of their other activities allowed, so they transformed into a telephone befriending service and offered a shopping and prescription pick up service. They asked for more volunteers and we were delighted with the response, gaining 100 new people all willing to help. Waitrose offered a supply of £15 bags of shopping free of charge to help the most vulnerable and once the funds from Waitrose were depleted the Harrogate Round Table sought funding and have kept

the Waitrose bag incentive going on a weekly basis. They also teamed up with Paul from Pablo's Kitchen to deliver delicious frozen meals. Earlier this month Paul delivered his 5000th meal and plans are afoot for Christmas dinners. All this has kept Kate (in the orange jacket) and her team very busy!

Rhona (Alto 2) had a go at counted cross stitch and also found time to explore the Dales with some walking (ie exercising herself while her voice was resting!)



MORE LOCKDOWN TALES

Tess (Alto 1) has been working hard in her garden and recently harvested her home-grown potatoes. Three barrow loads of Maris Piper and Charlotte! Certainly plenty to share! And hardly any green or bad ones. All from a few seed potatoes that she was lucky enough to get online during Lockdown. Amongst her other crops she was proud to produce a giant marrow!



And finally - what of the Tenors and Basses? Just one happy tale to report from the gentlemen of the choir. Mark (Bass 2) reports that his middle daughter Alice married Rob on Sunday September 27th at St John the Baptist church, Healaugh. The original wedding date was October 24th but when Boris Johnson announced on Tuesday 22nd that the number of wedding guests would be reduced from 30 to 15 on Monday 28th, they decided - at 4 days notice - to bring it forward! They had to find a new caterer but everything worked out wonderfully and they had a very happy day. Mark can be spotted 4th in from the left just behind the small blond girl!



This Newsletter

If there is more you would like to read in this newsletter, or if you have a contribution then do let us know by getting in touch with Carolyn, the Friends Secretary – email friends@harrogatechoral.org.uk