



FRIENDS NEWS

Issue 6 January 2019



FROM THE CO- CHAIRS



It seems barely possible that so much time has elapsed since we last updated you via Newsletter. It has been a very busy time indeed, as you will see from the contents of this issue, and a very successful time.

We enjoyed all our concerts, and hope that you did too. The Messiah in the Royal Hall was a particular highlight, and was as you will see very well received indeed. We hope that you enjoyed the occasion as much as we did.

We have enjoyed our first few months in our shared role. We feel that it has been a very positive time on various fronts. Performances, reviews, finance, recruitment. Our numbers are growing, our finances are sound, thanks to very generous

financial support and to good attendances at concerts, and we continue to receive good reviews.

You are all important to us, as Friends of HCS, and one of the areas that we shall be focussing on this Spring is you! We intend to grow your group, and to explore how we can help you to enjoy even more your membership. We shall be seeking your input, and of course Carolyn's advice, as part of this process.

A Happy New Year to all, we look forward very much to seeing you all soon.

Amy and Paul

PLANNED CONCERT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Date	Venue	Work / notes
23 March 19	Royal Hall	Haydn – Creation
8 June 19	Ripon Cathedral	Faure – Requiem & Rutter – Feel the Spirit
9 November 19	Royal Hall	An Evening of Elgar with Guy Johnston playing Cello Concerto in E Minor Op 85, also Spirit of England & Music Makers
7 December 19	tbc	Handel - Messiah
28 March 20	Royal Hall	Rossini – Stabat Mater and Puccini – Messa di Gloria
27 June 20	Harrogate Convention Centre	Collaborative concert with HSO and other local choirs

This Newsletter

If there is more you would like to read in this newsletter then do let us know by getting in touch with Carolyn, the Friends Secretary – email friends@harrogatechoral.org.uk
Perhaps a Friend might even like to take over as editor!

COMMITTEE REPORT

The following is a summary of items discussed at the meeting held on 11th January 2019 (and at Exec Meetings between September and January) including a few items agreed by email discussion. Our next full committee meeting is on 17th May 2019 but the Executive will be meeting every month so if there is anything you think we should be discussing please let Ruth know.

Concert Planning

The concerts for the 2019-2020 season have been agreed (and are listed overleaf). Dates at the Royal Hall have been reserved through to the end of the 2021-22 season.

Choir Trips

Ann and Chris are now collecting member's names for the trip to sing in Lincoln Cathedral on 1st June 2019. The committee are working on the possibility of a short 3 day trip to Italy as part of the town twinning initiative but this is very much still in the early stages of planning.

Policies etc on Website

We continue to keep the society's policies up to date on the members page of the website – to view them all just go to the "members" tab on the top line of the home page, www.harrogatechoral.org.uk. The most recent change being a note in respect of the wearing of poppies.

Concert Management

The committee noted various lessons learned from the Parry concert – on the positive side it was great to sit and listen to others for a change / the Oxford choir although small worked well and sounded fantastic in the Royal Hall / ultimately it wasn't a difficult concert / a compère was a good idea. On the negative side - avoid midweek concerts / minute all substantive discussions howsoever brief and informal / don't try to plan round royalty / focus on the idea behind the concert / make sure all marketing is clear and don't design posters etc by large committee / make sure all music costs are fully researched and agreed in advance.

The Messiah in Leeds presented its own challenges –both soprano and mezzo soloists pulled out at the last minute and it was also agreed that in the future we should perhaps not try to perform a concert two nights running as it was very hard work on the organisational front and many choir members also found it hard, in fact due to illness some were only able to sing in the first performance whereas if they had rested that night they might have been ok for the Harrogate Messiah. It was also difficult in respect of people at work and the rehearsal times for a Friday concert.

Recruitment

The website continues to produce a steady stream of new singers – mainly ladies but one or two few enquiries from gentlemen. The Open Rehearsal event for men is still being discussed, a venue has been found but a date and publicity requirements remain to be finalised.

Halcyon

The young Halcyon singers have been offered funding to go on training courses and Marilynne is waiting to see if any of them take this up.

Sponsorship

We are most fortunate to have been granted a further five years sponsorship from the Bramall Trust. This will enable us to not only perform our main concerts but also to perform in some more unusual venues as part of our outreach programme.

REVIEW OF “I WAS GLAD”

Here is the review of “I Was Glad” known to us as the Parry concert, the concert was organised in partnership with The Royal Hall Restoration Trust to launch the new scheme for floodlighting Royal Hall and the Cenotaph and also as a celebration of the end of the “Great” War and also the 10th Anniversary of the opening of the refurbished Royal Hall and centenary of the death of composer Sir Hubert Parry who conducted the inaugural concert at the Royal Hall. The photo below shows conductor Andrew Padmore talking to James Fox who was compere and (far left) James Short the conductor of the Chapel choir of Exeter College Oxford



You know when you see Dame Fanny Waterman at a concert that some serious music making is about to happen and so it was last Thursday evening at the Royal Hall in Harrogate. On opening the very informative programme notes I realised that we were celebrating more than Parry, but also the Royal Hall’s Restoration Trust. The evening began with Edward Fox OBE talking about Parry’s connection with the Royal Hall and as the founder President of the Royal Hall Restoration Trust and fund raising for the proposed floodlighting of the Royal Hall Façade and the War Memorial in the centre of Town. We also had a note from HRH The Prince of Wales, patron of the Restoration Trust. He has been very much involved in the Royal Hall and officially opened the Royal Hall after its initial restoration in 2008.

Singing tonight we had the Harrogate Choral Society and the Chapel Choir of Exeter College, Oxford. The orchestra was the Amici Ensemble, somewhat similar in its make up to Ripon’s St Cecilia orchestra. Both comprise professionals from larger orchestras and the local freelance community. Under the able direction of Andrew Padmore HCS’s Music Director, they were a delight to hear.

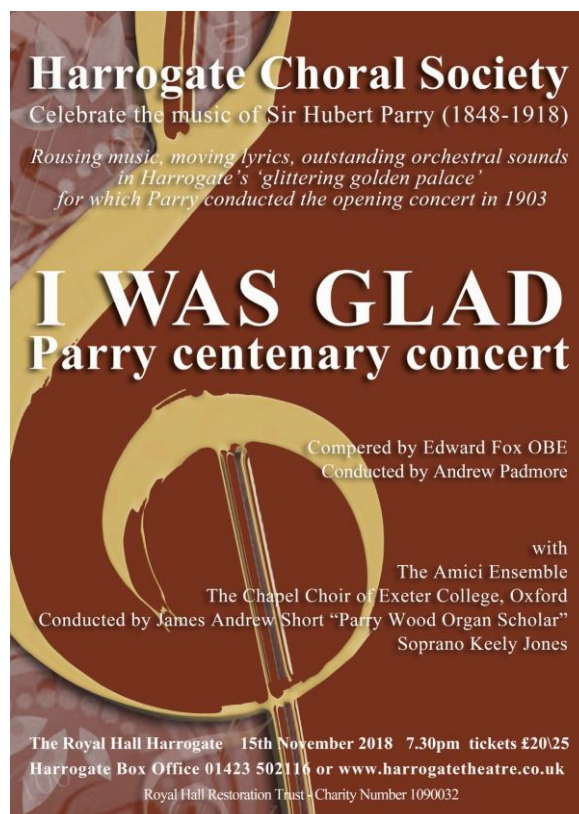
Most of the works tonight were by Sir Hubert Parry and the evening commenced with both choirs singing ‘I was Glad’ now a perennial favourite and played at all royal weddings since Edward VII. We were really celebrating Parry’s connection with the Royal Hall 100 years ago and also the 100 years since the end of World War 1. I’m sure that most people would agree with me when I say that The Harrogate Choral Society is one of the most revered choirs in North Yorkshire and their performance tonight was no exception.

We were shortly to discover how good were the tiny choir of Exeter College, Oxford who sang three more of Hubert Parry's compositions exquisitely, unaccompanied; I was really impressed at their tonal quality, such a small choir under the direction of James Andrew Short, but they filled the Hall with their music.

We then had the Amici Ensemble play 'Hypatia' incidental music by Parry in three movements, which was a great. After the interval Edward Fox OBE introduced the second half of the concert with HCS singing 'Blest Pair of Sirens' followed by the Amici Ensemble playing Severn Rhapsody by Gerald Finzi who used to be a Harrogate resident, I love his music. Back to Chapel Choir of Exeter College with three more Parry compositions,, again a delight to hear them. The Amici ensemble played a composition 'Heroic Elegy' by Farrar who has connections with Parry and Harrogate, he died tragically in September 1918 just before the end of the war, such a waste of talent.

What could we possibly have as a finale on an evening celebrating Hubert Parry but 'Jerusalem' sung with great gusto by both choirs and most of the audience. A wonderful evening of memories and beautiful music.

GEORGE PYMAN



Harrogate Choral Society
Celebrate the music of Sir Hubert Parry (1848-1918)
*Rousing music, moving lyrics, outstanding orchestral sounds
in Harrogate's 'glittering golden palace'
for which Parry conducted the opening concert in 1903*

I WAS GLAD

Parry centenary concert

Compered by Edward Fox OBE
Conducted by Andrew Padmore

with
The Amici Ensemble
The Chapel Choir of Exeter College, Oxford
Conducted by James Andrew Short "Parry Wood Organ Scholar"
Soprano Keely Jones

The Royal Hall Harrogate 15th November 2018 7.30pm tickets £20/25
Harrogate Box Office 01423 502116 or www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk
Royal Hall Restoration Trust Charity Number 1090032



KING GEORGE II STOOD DURING THE "HALLELUJAH" CHORUS... OR MAYBE NOT

An often repeated legend about *Messiah* tells the story of King George II who was so moved by the "Hallelujah" chorus during the London premiere of *Messiah* that he rose to his feet and then everyone in attendance followed suit as not to be sitting when the king stood.

Thus we believe the regularly debated tradition of standing during the "Hallelujah" chorus came to be — also giving birth to countless passive-aggressive battles of concert decorum between the sitters and standers.

However, according to various experts, there is no truth to this story. In fact there is no evidence King George II was even in attendance, and it is unlikely the newspaper writers that were in the audience would have overlooked mentioning a royal presence. The first reference to this story was a letter written 37 years after the fact.

Just where that leaves us in the annual stand-versus-sit showdown though is still very much up for debate....

REVIEW OF MESSIAH AT ST AIDANS CHURCH, LEEDS

The photo below shows part of the famous Brangwyn Mosaic from the church.



Harrogate Choral Society last visited St Aidan's Church, Harehills, Leeds in December 2015 to sing Messiah and Rev. Andi Hofbauer was delighted to welcome them to sing again. The church is worthy of a visit in itself with the famous Brangwyn Mosaics as well as an impressive marble font and a confessional built by the mouseman Robert Thompson of Kilburn amongst the many impressive features.

Messiah opens with an overture which was played by the choir's very experienced accompanist Thomas Moore, who is organist at Wakefield Cathedral, playing the James Jepson Binns organ, an instrument of noted historic importance.

The vocal performance was begun in great style by tenor Toby Ward's rendering of "Comfort Ye" and he continued in the same vein, later adding great pathos to "Thy Rebuke has Broken my Heart". Bass Edward Seymour has a powerful voice and sang an authoritative "Thus Saith the Lord", and later on "The People that Walked in Darkness" and "The Trumpet Shall Sound" his rich voice resonating well throughout the whole church. The trumpeter in "The Trumpet shall sound" was one of the choir's youngest singers Ed Freeman, showing he can both sing and play!

A family bereavement and illness meant that the Soprano and Mezzo soloists were actually last minute substitutes, but Helen Latham, Soprano and Amy Payne, Mezzo acquitted themselves well with some lovely singing.

Of course the main performers were the choir themselves and Music Director Andrew Padmore, who guided them expertly through the many choruses - all of which were performed very well indeed. Having heard performances of Harrogate Choral singing Messiah with an orchestra this was a very different performance, somewhat slower as the organ cannot achieve the tempi of string players but most enjoyable. Of particular note were "Since by Man Came Death" and of course the "Hallelujah" chorus. The weather outside might have been cold, wet and stormy but inside the church the music was heavenly.

REVIEW OF MESSIAH IN THE ROYAL HALL HARROGATE

The photo below was taken by the HCS official photographer Ernesto Rogata.



For many, the performance of Handel's Messiah at this time of the year marks the start of the Christmas season. Certainly judging by the size of the audience at the Royal Hall that greeted Harrogate Choral Society at their concert on Saturday night, the work still retains a huge popularity among concert goers and the public at large.

As usual, Andrew Padmore, the Music Director and Conductor showed a thorough preparation of the score attending to much detail and interpretation. The Manchester Camerata were in attendance and began with an excellent rendering of the Overture that opens the work. The dotted feature in the first section was generous and gently handled, the following allegro was brisk and decisive with excellent string playing. In fact the orchestral playing throughout the evening was quite superb and the players were obviously enjoying themselves.

The soloists were well chosen by the Conductor, Jenny Stafford, soprano gave a good account of "How beautiful Are The Feet" and her earlier recitatives. Particularly good was "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth" which was sung with great feeling. Gaynor Keeble, mezzo-soprano sang beautifully throughout. "Behold, A Virgin Shall Conceive" and "O Thou That Tellest" were simply lovely. Cliff Zammit Stevens, tenor, sang with excellent diction, opening the evening with the recitative, "Comfort ye" and the aria, "Every Valley", settling the audience and giving a quiet confidence to the evening. Alistair Ollerenshaw, baritone, gave an impressive rendition of both "Why Do The Nations" and also The "Trumpet Shall Sound", accompanied with first-class trumpet playing from the orchestra.

The Choral Society gave a truly excellent performance singing with tremendous energy and vitality. This was a much appreciated performance greeted with great applause at the end and an excellent start to the Christmas Season.

Adrian Selway



A selection of audience messages from the Harrogate Messiah audience

“Many congratulations on the performance last evening. The Royal Hall is such a beautifully intimate setting for this oratorio. I loved every minute...”

“It was an absolutely fantastic performance, congratulations. The quality of that concert equalled anything that one might go to in London. In fact a number of seasoned regulars who go to the Messiah every year were saying that it was the best performance yet..”

“...the performance of Messiah was a veritable triumph - and one that will long be remembered. It seemed that each and every member of the choir put heart and soul into an outstanding performance of choral singing - such that, at the end of the first half, a captivated audience was stunned into silence before enthusiastically applauding. The energy and vibrancy of the piece was inspiring - and a tribute to the dedication and hard work of Harrogate Choral Society and its Music Director..”

“...it is encouraging to witness such rapport between conductor and choir, as evidenced in an uplifting and exciting performance of Handel's Messiah. The rousing cheers and exuberant reaction of the audience to conductor and choir said it all..”

“...just to say how wonderful the performance was last night. I used to sing Messiah with a Leeds Choir, but I don't think we were ever as good as last night. Keep it going!....”



Concert Booking for Future Concerts

Tickets for Creation Messiah in Harrogate on 23rd March are available via the box office at Harrogate Theatre – tel 01423 502116 or online at www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk

Tickets (unreserved) for the concert in Ripon Cathedral in June will be available soon from the Theatre box office

Friends and Members can use in house booking forms or email tickets@harrogatechoral.org.uk for your bookings

HCS CONTINUING TO HELP OTHERS

Our Charitable donations have continued and the latest charity to benefit was Supporting Older People, <http://supportingolderpeople.org.uk/> a charity established in 1982, whose aim is to alleviate loneliness and isolation often experienced by older people living on their own. They primarily support people in the Harrogate and Knaresborough district. As a result of ticket sales from the Harrogate Messiah we were delighted to present them with a cheque for £600.



Co Chair Amy (right) presented the cheque to Kate from Supporting Older People

As well as our donation each charity can also hold a bucket collection at the end of their concert and use the interval to hold tombolas, raise awareness and engage in other fundraising activities. In total HCS have donated £2675 since September 2017 to 6 charities. The image below shows the SOP team all ready for some hard work!

