



FRIENDS NEWS

Issue 7 April 2019



FROM THE CO- CHAIRS

Thank you to all of you who were able to attend our performance of Haydn's Creation. The concert continued the trend of increased audiences. The final figure was our highest attendance at a March/April Royal Hall Concert since 2011.

Performing an entire work from memory, or perhaps by heart is a more artistically appropriate way of describing it, was a new experience for the choir.

It's fair to say that opinion was divided amongst the choir members but Andrew was determined that we could carry it off without copies and his determination and professional judgement were more than vindicated by what was by all accounts a very strong choral performance. We hope you agree.



We are looking forward to seeing you in Ripon on 8th June, when there will be a Reception before the concert to which all Friends will be invited.

In the meantime we are looking forward to our choir trip to Lincoln on 1st June. This has been organised by Chris and Ann Shovelton, to whom we are very grateful. Some of you will remember the previous very successful trips to Cartmel and to Alnwick that they planned for us.

Thank you as always for your support.
Very best wishes
Amy and Paul

PLANNED CONCERT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Date	Venue	Work / notes
1 June 2019	St Giles Parish Church, Lincoln	A Free Concert / Choir Trip
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
Sunday (!)	Tennants Garden	Handel – Messiah
8 December 19	Rooms, Leyburn	
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 by the Executive since the last full Committee meeting which took place on 11th January 2019. Our next full committee meeting is on 17th May 2019 but the Executive will continue to meet every month so if there is anything you think we should be discussing please let Ruth know.

Artistic and Concert Planning

It has now been confirmed that Messiah in 2019 will take place in Tennants Garden Rooms Leyburn, on Sunday 8th December at 6 pm. The reason for not performing in the Royal Hall is that there was no weekend date available during December, nor was Ripon Cathedral free. The committee welcome this opportunity to take our music to a different audience; the earlier start time is to take account of travel times for those from Harrogate who wish to attend. More information will be available shortly about coach transport etc.

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 changes are to policies related to Equal Opportunities, Risk Management, Financial Controls, Reserves, and Contingency planning.

Concert Management / Follow up

The choir found the challenge of singing Creation from memory both challenging and rewarding in equal measure! This is likely to be tried again at some point in the future as some very positive audience feedback followed.

Following a suggestion from one of our Friends the committee invited schools to send parties of pupils to the concert at a much discounted rate, the idea being to fill the Dress Circle (upstairs seating) which is otherwise unused. Unfortunately nobody took us up on the offer but the committee will consider our future programme and try this idea again at some point in the future.

Recruitment

We are fortunate that our website continues to produce a steady stream of new singers – as previously these are mostly ladies but recently excellent singers have joined the tenors and the basses.

Friends

Carolyn – the Friends Secretary – attended the meeting in March to discuss matters relating to Friends and how they interact with HCS and its workings. One suggestion was that it might be nice to feature an interview with a Friend in each newsletter as some have fascinating life stories to tell. It was agreed we should also invite our Friends to pre-concert receptions when these are held. There will be a Reception in the Cathedral prior to the Ripon concert in June. We should also look at ways of recruiting more Friends.

Networking

Co-Chairs Amy and Paul travelled to Manchester to meet Bob Riley, CEO of Manchester Camerata. MC have recently revamped their ways of working with successful trail-blazing into uncharted territory in terms of new audiences and innovative classical performances. Amy and Paul had a stimulating and wide-ranging meeting and have invited Bob to come across the Pennines to talk informally to HCS about the way in which MC has deconstructed and rebuilt its audience, image and artistic ambition. Although Harrogate is not Manchester, and HCS is not a professional group, there are generic issues that apply and we are keen to learn.

REVIEW OF “CREATION”

Here is the review of “Creation”. The photo below is of Andrew Padmore with the three soloists – from left to right Sarah Power, Miles Taylor, Andrew, and Ben Thapa.



‘Choral Society scales new heights’

A near capacity audience gathered in the Royal Hall to hear Harrogate Choral Society’s performance of Joseph Haydn’s ground-breaking oratorio ‘The Creation’. Composed at the end of the eighteenth century, the work depicts the creation of the world as described in the Book of Genesis and is generally considered to be one of the Austrian composer’s masterpieces. For its time, ‘The Creation’ was definitely forward-looking and offers many challenges for any ensemble tackling the piece. On this occasion, the combined forces of soprano, tenor and bass soloists, chorus and orchestra under the skilful direction of Andrew Padmore more than rose to that challenge in a performance characterised by energy, attention to detail and a sense of sheer musical enjoyment.

The trio of soloists (who represent the [archangels Raphael](#), [Uriel](#) and [Gabriel](#) and, later, [Adam](#) and [Eve](#)) were well-chosen, their voices perfectly suited to this music. The soprano soloist, Sarah Power, excelled throughout, mesmerising the audience with her impeccable phrasing, lightness of touch and technical prowess in a series of stunning arias and ensembles. Tenor Ben Thapa added a healthy touch of charisma to the role of Uriel, bringing an almost operative flavour to the role that did not seem out of place in a work that could almost be staged. Bass Miles Taylor grew in stature as the work progressed, his role requiring an extremely wide vocal range. There were some beautifully performed ensembles throughout the work with the duets between soprano and bass in Part 3 standing out in particular.

The orchestra play a major role in ‘The Creation’, Haydn using the various instruments to give added emphasis to the setting of this colourful text, including the use of the contra-bassoon at the words ‘heavy beasts’ which is always guaranteed to amuse! In this performance, the Amici Ensemble played with a real sense of style and conviction. Particular mention must be made of some delightful playing by the woodwind principals throughout.

Special praise though has to go to the Harrogate Choral Society who are to be commended wholeheartedly for singing the whole work from memory, no easy feat given the complexity of some of the choral writing. If there was the very occasional moment of slight insecurity, this was more than compensated by the tremendous sense of unanimity and sense of purpose of a choir singing without music copies, responding to their conductor's every gesture and communicating with an audience who were hanging on to their every syllable!

Overall, this was a splendid performance. The excellent programme note stated that the audience at the first performance in 1798 was spellbound. Over two centuries later, I think many of the Harrogate audience were too!

Kevin Paynes



Concert Booking for Future Concerts

Tickets for Rutter – Feel the Spirit / Faure – Requiem
in Ripon Cathedral on 8th June 2019

are available via the box office at Harrogate Theatre
tel 01423 502116 or online at www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk

Seating is unreserved

tickets can also be bought from
the bookshop in the cathedral

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

HCS CONTINUING TO HELP OTHERS

Our Charitable donations have continued and the latest charity to benefit was ABF (the The Soldiers' Charity which is the National Charity of the British Army, supporting soldiers and veterans from every conflict, and their immediate families), <https://soldierscharity.org/#>, this is also the current Mayor's charity.

As a result of ticket sales from Creation we will shortly be presenting them with a cheque for £360

The charity is also the Mayors charity for the year and with the help of some young soldiers from the Army Foundation College they ran a raffle and bucket collection raising a further £400.

(picture to follow in next newsletter)

LAST BUT NOT LEAST

As you will have seen in the Committee Report we would very much like to involve Friends more with the Society and Carolyn reports that some of you have interesting life stories which others would like to read about in this newsletter. Is there anyone who would like to volunteer to go first? The next edition is planned for late June.