



FRIENDS NEWS



Issue 1 October 2017

FROM THE CHAIRMAN



This is our first attempt at a new-style newsletter which we hope you will enjoy. So before we go any further, we must put on record our gratitude to Tony Latter who, as editor and compiler, has produced, over two and a half years (from Jan 2015 until this summer) some fifteen issues of the HCS newsletter, 'The Stray Stave'. But, he notes, within all those he only ever received contributory articles from just five members! So it was a huge effort on his part, one of which he feels the need to pass on elsewhere, and we owe him a huge amount of thanks for all his efforts.

Tony also realised that choir members were being more regularly kept up-to-date by Ruth's weekly Sunday email and therefore a different style of newsletter to complement them might be a better way forward. So here is the pilot issue - aimed specifically at keeping Friends up to date - but which will go out to all singing HCS members as well as our Friends (and friends!).

We shall be looking for someone to take over the reins of this new venture (and thanks to Ruth for the initial compilation) and also snippets of information and 'gossip' to be provided from the membership. But for now, we hope this issue will meet with your approval and we will welcome comments and ideas for its future continuation and format.

Peter Thompson

What do you want to hear about?

To keep in touch with you, the Friends of HCS, this new publication Friends News will be sent out three to four times per year. We hope you don't mind if we share it with our singing members too! We will try include a brief Committee report, reviews of any recent concerts plus news of any other Choral happenings, the aim being to keep you up to date with all things relevant to the Harrogate Choral Society.



However if there is more you would like to read about then please 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!

OPEN REHEARSAL

Although we held two Open Rehearsals in May - after the Poulenc and Walton concert – we sadly had very few guests. Perhaps it was the wrong time of year! So we held a further Open Rehearsal on 13th September and were delighted to be joined by a number of guest singers, some of whom are now fully fledged Members. Andrew led us through a wide range of interesting exercises – some of which are illustrated here!



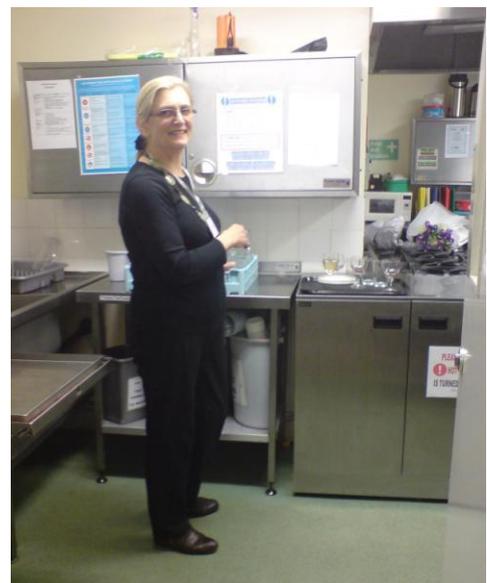
We were also able to celebrate on the evening when Deputy Chair Amy presented a certificate for 25 years of membership to Soprano Catriona.

There are currently 18 members with 25 years of service or more, plus of course Jenny with over 50 years!

Many of our Friends reached their 25th Anniversary as singers before retiring and becoming Friends – well done all.

The Membership team looked after everyone well with wine and nibbles! We now have weekly tea breaks in the middle of rehearsals so having wine made it a bit special. Here is Bridget “having fun” in the kitchen.

If any Friends would like to come along to rehearsals and help out with refreshments you would be more than welcome – just let Carolyn know and she will put you in touch with Paul the Trustee who leads the membership team.



REVIEW OF WALTON AND POULENC CONCERT

You will recall from the last HCS Newsletter (May 2017) that the concert featuring Walton – Belshazzar’s Feast and Poulenc – Gloria had just taken place. In case you missed the review in the paper here it is – accompanied by a photo of some singers ready for the concert!

The magnificent and sumptuous Royal Hall was the venue for the latest concert given by Harrogate Choral Society under its Conductor and Musical Director Andrew Padmore. Accompanied by the Amici Ensemble, the programme comprised two major choral compositions interspersed with orchestral and choral items providing the audience with an attractive evening of musical variety and contrast.



The concert opened with two works by the French composer Gabriel Faure. The first was the Cantique de Jean Racine. This was beautifully sung. The second of Faure’s works to be performed was the well-known Pavane. The tempo for this was slow and very relaxed providing a challenge for the Amici Ensemble who played with very even and sonorous tone throughout.

The first half concluded with a very good and confident performance of the Gloria by Francis Poulenc. With its short cut and emphatic phrases as well as distinctive harmony unique to Poulenc, this work is immediately attractive and it was obvious that the Society not only knew it well but that it had been rehearsed with great care. Katy Kelly, soprano, replacing the indisposed Sarah Power, sang the third and fifth movements with sublime ease and beauty. The last movement was sung with great care and control, producing some of the best pianissimos the writer can ever remember hearing.

Following a fine rendering of William Walton’s march Crown Imperial, the concert concluded with his remarkable work, Belshazzar’s Feast. This, perhaps the most spectacular of his compositions is vocally and orchestrally difficult and rhythmically challenging. It takes a good choir, orchestra and conductor to really bring it off and all three were present together with some very fine singing and playing from both choir and orchestra. Here we heard the fine voice of Ashley Riches, bass-baritone, as narrator. The sopranos and altos sang with excellent tone and diction whilst the tenors and basses produced remarkable tone and power producing the dramatic overall sound essential for this work. The orchestra played faultlessly and the whole composition was brought together with the tremendous talent of the conductor, Andrew Padmore.

Adrian Selway



COMMITTEE REPORT

The following is a summary of items discussed at meetings held on 19 July 2017 and 25 Sept 2017

Budgets

As we are currently quite “well off” thanks to the very generous donation from the Mayor’s Ball it was agreed to put a large sum into a savings account of the type where we can get the money back without losing interest. Ticket targets for concerts have been set at a (hopefully) achievable level which means we should end the season roughly even.

Closing down the old Charity

During the summer we were able to send the final accounts to the Charity Commission and thus close down the original charity, so we are now just Charitable Incorporated Organisation 1164776.

Concert Planning

The concert in St Wilfrids in June will be on an American theme and will include Chichester Psalms and various other works composed by and/or loved by Americans. In addition to the concerts already planned it was suggested to have a choir day out concert in St Marys, Richmond in May. Plans for future seasons are underway but nothing has yet been agreed beyond the Mozart concert in October 2018 conducted by Brian Kay and Messiah on 8 December 2018.

Child Safeguarding

We continue to battle with the powers that be at NYCC over their interpretation of the legislation and how this affects singers under 16 singing in our concert.

Membership Matters

It was reported that we now have a Members Mentor (for new and existing members) who will help people with learning the music. A further review of concert dress took place and it was agreed gentlemen would wear black shirts without ties for the Opera concert

Marketing & Publicity

It was agreed to spend some of the money from the Mayors Ball on updating our website by employing someone to create a more modern look.

Halcyon and Beati

The Halcyon singers are singing with the adult choir from September but will also enjoy occasional Sunday afternoon workshops just for them and any other young singers who might be interested in joining. Beati are now back to full strength, ie 10 ladies.

PLANNED CONCERT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

| Season | Date | Venue | Works |
|-----------|---------------------|-------------------|---|
| 2017-2018 | 9 Dec 17 | Royal Hall | Handel – Messiah |
| | 16 Dec 17 | Harrogate | The Harrogate Christmas Concert |
| | | Convention Centre | With Harrogate Symphony Orchestra and hundreds of Primary School Children |
| | 10 March 18 | Royal Hall | Mendelssohn – Elijah |
| | 19 May 18 | St Marys Richmond | Celebrating 70 years of HCS |
| 9 June 18 | St Wilfrid’s Church | HCS go on tour! | |
| 2018-2019 | 20 Oct 18 | Royal Hall | A Nightingale Sang |
| | | | A concert of music composed by and /or loved by Americans |
| | | | The Magic of Mozart (including ‘Requiem’) Conducted by Brian Kay |

REVIEW OF OPERA GALA CONCERT

Our most recent concert was the Gala Night of Opera in the Royal Hall on 14th October which proved very popular and realised an audience of over 500! We were able to put on what was a quite expensive concert thanks to a generous bequest from Elaine Howarth who used to sing with us and whom some of you will have known. We hope you were there and enjoyed it but just in case here is the review to give you a taste of how the evening went with a couple of photos!



The Royal Hall, home to Harrogate's Choral Society was well filled by a very enthusiastic audience for the Society's autumn concert which took the form of a Gala Night of Opera. The Society under the baton of their Conductor, Andrew Padmore and accompanied by the Amici Orchestra presented a fascinating, varied and very attractive programme of operatic arias and choruses.

The Choral Society and Orchestra began with the Procession and Chorale from *Die Meistersinger* by Wagner, the Society in excellent voice and the Orchestra in fine form. This was followed by a chance to listen to the ladies of the choir producing very fine tone in the Chorus of the Peasant Girls from *Eugene Onegin* by Tchaikovsky.

Andrew Padmore's choice of soloists for the evening couldn't have been better, Sarah Fox, soprano, brought the delights of her voice in the Recitative and Aria, *Dove Sono* from Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* and in *Dido's Lament* from *Dido and Aeneas* by Purcell, the latter sung with much beauty and pathos. John Cunningham, bass baritone, brought a rich and resonant voice to the evening, ideally suited to the surroundings. The *Toreador Song* was splendidly sung with great verve and panache following which John sang the utterly beautiful *O pure and tender Star of Eve* from *Tannhauser* by Wagner with great sensitivity and grace.

The two soloists joined in the ever popular *La ci darem la mano* by Mozart with just a little acting to make it most effective. The Choral Society, together with members of the *Halcyon Singers* sang very well indeed – really well with excellent tuning and tone in all voices and the accompaniment from the orchestra was always superb. Marilynne Davies compered the evening with great aplomb and relaxed humour. A fine evening of musical entertainment.



Adrian Selway

HCS HELPING OTHERS

At our committee meeting in July it was agreed that to celebrate our 70th Anniversary year we would pass on some of our good fortune and offer support to some local charities by donating £1 for each ticket sold to a charity per concert and also working with them on publicity to help raise awareness of what they do for the local community. Each charity will also be able to hold a bucket collection at the end of their concert and use the interval to raise awareness / hold tombolas etc etc.

The first charity we worked with for the Gala Night of Opera concert was Time Together www.time-together.info who are based in Starbeck with over twenty years of providing personalised and bespoke support, opportunities, information and choices for people with Autism, Asperger's and other additional needs in the Harrogate and District area. They focus on enhancing their clients' independent skills, increasing confidence and wellbeing, and enabling them to access activities and interest groups. Alongside their support work they also facilitate various social groups, activity groups and a support group for individuals and families affected by autistic spectrum conditions and additional needs.



At a recent rehearsal our Chairman Peter Thompson was delighted to present a cheque to Sam Westwood, their Service Manager. Also present at the rehearsal was Frances Eliot from HELP who are the nominated charity for Messiah on 9th December (<http://www.helpharrogate.org.uk>) The charity provides a wide range of services to elderly and vulnerable people in the Harrogate District, including a volunteer driver service for appointments and meetings – and even concerts! Here is a picture of everyone including some members and Music Director Andrew Padmore

