

August 2006 Newsletter



Dear Members and Patrons,

Chairman's Notes



How time flies; it is almost a year since I became Chairman and I knew that I had a hard act to follow after the excellent way Ron Medland carried out his duties. I must thank him for all his guidance when I have needed it.

We have had a very good year; we have maintained our usual high standard in our performances and it was a joy to be able to sing at Salisbury Cathedral. This was a new experience for some members and we also spent a lovely day together. I have been asked if we could visit another Cathedral in the future. This will be put to the Committee.

As Concert Manager, my job is not so easy at times. The members must appreciate that there are certain things that we have to conform to; although we moan about Health and Safety, it is in our own interest that we adhere to the recommendations because we do not wish to be in a position of being sued. What must also be remembered is that our performance commences as soon as we appear on the stage; there are people in the audience who monitor how we perform and we are expected to carry out their recommendations to improve our performance.

We have a very hard-working committee and the inspiration in the design of the posters has been very much welcomed. It is with regret that we must accept the resignation of our Secretary, Catherine Hartley, who has kept me in line and has been very supportive. Thank you Catherine, you have been a great help and always with a lovely smile. So now we are looking for a new Secretary: there must be someone who would volunteer for this position, please do let us know. I truly thank all the Committee for their continued help and support, it is really appreciated. You will find attached a nomination slip which needs to be returned as soon as

possible to the Secretary. Also enclosed is a Notice regarding our Annual General Meeting which will be held on Wednesday 20th September. You will appreciate that this is a very important meeting and I do hope that, as in the past, we have a good attendance.

Our Fundraising team works very hard for the Society and I do thank them all for what they do. I also thank the members of the Choral Society who have come up with brilliant ideas for fundraising and given their time and energy to make their ideas work.

I am grateful to the members who are inspired to contribute to the Newsletter.

Finally, we must thank John and Peter for all the hard work and time they both put in to make our rehearsals enjoyable and to get us to such a standard for our performances – where would we be without them?

We have a great celebration next year, our 50th Anniversary, so please do note the dates of our performances now as we will need a large choir. To help with the celebrations we are holding an Anniversary dinner at the Cheltenham Park Hotel on Saturday 21st July, 2007 so we do hope that you will all join in this special event.

I have enjoyed my first term of Office and may we continue to enjoy our membership of the Charlton Kings Choral Society.

Margaret Walker

From the Conductor



"The Charlton Kings Choral Society continues to be a force to be reckoned with. During their singing of the chorale *Let all men praise the Lord* they sounded as if they meant every word".

This was the conclusion to Roger Jones's review of our performance of Mendelssohn's *Hymn of Praise* last

November – a fine compliment indeed, and well deserved. The past year has been very successful for the choir and those who have come to listen to us should have felt very well entertained. The decision to include some more popular and accessible items in our programmes worked well, as was shown by the smiles on everyone's faces as we sang *A merry little Christmas* in our carol concert, and by the encouragingly large audience for our programme of French choral favourites in May. This last concert was one of our best (in spite of the reluctance of the sopranos and tenors to sing at one point!) and I felt that we really got beneath the surface of Duruflé's *Requiem*, discovering the finer points that make it such an inspirational work.

I would like to thank everyone who sang for our Evensong at Salisbury Cathedral on that blisteringly hot day. In spite of the less than ideal conditions you sang in a way that was worthy of the majesty of that great building, and in the end the (initially terrifying) psalm was tackled with confidence, and Balfour Gardiner's *Evening Hymn* made a thrilling climax to the service. It all made for a very good day out, and I hope that we can do something similar for a summer session in the future. For her tremendously competent organ playing in this, and in Duruflé's *Requiem*, I'm sure we would all like to express our gratitude to Fiona Brown.

If we were to give our performances a star rating, they might turn out something like this:

- * a spirited performance in which most of the notes are right and basic instructions for expression are observed.
- ** a performance that gets beyond the notes and reveals the character of the music through more careful attention to detail, and a greater feeling of being at ease with the music.
- *** an authoritative performance in which the musical qualities and atmosphere of the piece are clearly communicated to the audience in a confident yet relaxed way.

How many times do we achieve a 3 star rating? In the Duruflé concert I believe we did, but it's fair to say that

in the last few years we have experienced all three categories. One thing that still concerns me is the fact that we are 'losing' approximately 20% of the choir for each of our major concerts. Put another way, although we always imagine ourselves to be a choir of 100, only 80 actually sing in the concerts – surely an unacceptably low number? While always sympathetic to unforeseen circumstances such as illness or family bereavement, these alone cannot account for such a high percentage. Perhaps it is worth reinforcing that, while the musical, educational and social value of the weekly rehearsals is paramount, a prime objective of the choir is to give high quality concerts, thus enriching the cultural life of Cheltenham.

With this in mind we need to approach our 50th anniversary season at full strength. In November we will perform a splendid Baroque programme in the appropriate setting of the Pump Room. Handel's delightfully festive *Coronation Anthems* will be paired with the beauty and sophistication of Bach's *Magnificat*, always a favourite in the run up to Christmas.

Our 50th anniversary concert on 19th May 2007 in the Town Hall presents a great challenge (financially as well as musically) as we perform Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*. If we all commit ourselves to it 100% then I believe we can make a success of this great work by one of England's leading composers (celebrating the 150th anniversary of his birth in 2007). On this occasion we will be joined by members of Philomusica as the semichorus – they are devoted Elgarians and will do a fine job. The Regency Sinfonia will be in one of its more augmented states, and our three soloists will be from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, thus celebrating our long and successful connection with them.

Looking forward to seeing you at the first rehearsal on September 6th,

John Wright

Social Events

In the past we have successfully organised several Variety Shows in aid of the Choral Society's funds. We are arranging a Show on Saturday 30th September, 2006 at the Sacred Hearts

Church Hall and Choral Society members are invited to take part in providing the entertainment. This can be singing, sketches, comedy, poems etc. If you have not already put your name on the list of entertainers but would like to be included, please see Margaret Walker. During September the tickets will be on sale and we would like all members to sell as many as possible. This promises to be a good night.

Wanted

We have a small ladies' choir who will sing at weddings, funerals etc. and the revenue raised by this choir goes towards our fundraising. If anyone wishes to join this choir (particularly Altos) or can promote us for functions, please contact Margaret Walker.



Diary Dates

(concerts in **bold**)

2006

Wed 6 Sep First rehearsal

Wed 20 Sep AGM

(after rehearsal break)

Sat 7 Oct Autumn Market

(Stanton Room)

Sat 11 Nov Bach Magnificat

Handel Coronation Anthems

(Pittville Pump Room)

Sat 9 Dec Christmas Market

(Stanton Room)

Sat 16 Dec Family Carol Concert

(St Mary's)

2007

Wed 10 Jan Resume rehearsals

Sat 19 May

Elgar The Dream of Gerontius

(Cheltenham Town Hall)

Sat 21 Jul Anniversary Dinner

(Cheltenham Park Hotel)

Been there, done that...

(contributed by Tony Ridlington)

Dorothy Sayers, a member of the Oxford Bach Choir, wrote:

"In one of those tiresome places where you come in fortissimo just off the beat, the whole of the first choir,

including myself, got stage fright and never came in at all. I have never lived through such a ghastly moment... then everybody in desperation sang wildly whatever notes they could hit on, and the organ came in, and by a miracle the thing righted itself."

[From "Dorothy L. Sayers – Her Life and Soul" by Barbara Reynolds]

And finally...

O ye of little faith

He's full of bright ideas, our John,
But this one takes the biscuit.
We're singing choral evensong
You wouldn't think he'd risk it!

In Salisbury Cathedral, too,
With all its fine traditions,
Let's hope that we can come up trumps
With our choral renditions.

Now, if you're used to singing psalms,
Mags, Nuncs and anthems too,
The thought of a cathedral trip
May well appeal to you.

But spare a thought for others, who
Have never had the task
Of singing lots of words, in fact
Probably half a sentence, all on one note
until you come to a line, possibly passing
an asterisk on the way –
It is a *lot* to ask!

And then there's the Responses –
Well! the only thing to fear
Is an exasperated Cantor,
With tuning fork to ear!

The anthem's going to raise the roof –
So long as we're not floored
By starting off the "middle bit"
Without a helpful chord!

I thought that John had bitten off
Far more than he could chew,
But he knew what he was doing
So apologies are due!

We've risen to the challenge.
We strive and never tire,
Which only goes to show we are
A simply *marvellous* choir!

Jill Smith