

August 2007 Newsletter



Dear Members and Patrons,

Chairman's Notes



As 2007 arrived, we were looking forward to a very exciting year celebrating our 50th anniversary and we all knew that we had to work really hard to make sure that the May concert would be a success. Members of the committee were making sure that everything was in its place and nothing was forgotten, fundraisers working to offset the cost of an expensive Town Hall concert and choir members attending rehearsals every week. John's idea of inviting James Gilchrist to be Gerontius was exciting and we knew that we had to perform well. All of a sudden the month of May was upon us and the 19th was not too far away when we would hold our 50th anniversary concert in the Town Hall. The day before the concert John received a telephone call telling us that Tania Mandzy, our mezzo from the Guildhall School, was unable to sing for us due to illness so where do we go from here at this late stage? We were delighted that Serena Kay stepped in at the last minute and performed extremely well at such short notice. We also thank James Gilchrist, Derek Welton from the Guildhall School, the Philomusica semichorus and the Regency Sinfonia for performing with us.

On this very special occasion, our patrons supported us well and we invited some local dignitaries as guests. The concert was enjoyed by everyone, it was an excellent performance and the feedback was great. Thank you to all who took part.

Although April was a great month as regards the weather, what happened to our summer? We were lucky to have a lovely evening for our summer concert in St. Peter's and the size of our audience gave a useful boost to our funds. The fact that we sing in so many different places makes being concert manager not easy and I do ask members to be patient and remember that they cannot always sit by whom they would like, but I try to do my best.

We continued our celebrations with an anniversary dinner at the Cheltenham Park Hotel. After the downpour of the previous day, this was a fine evening, sixty people attended and we were well served by the Hotel. Due to the adverse weather, our guest speaker and his wife were unable to attend but with a little input from me and the unforgettable speech from John, the evening was enjoyed by everyone.

I do thank the members of the Market team who are retiring this year after many years of running the stalls at our markets and coffee mornings, namely Sylvia Baldwin, Chris Irving, Anne Surgenor, Sylvia Ward and David Wilby. I also thank Pat Sherwell and Ros Holman who organise the coffee each week, Mary Bascombe for all her cooking (irrespective of what Gerald says), also Mary for the jumble sale, Elizabeth Mayne, for organising both the sales of tickets and the book sales and Jill Smith for her anniversary book of poems. Last but not least, a big thank you to the CKCS committee for all their hard work and to John and Peter for all their time and patience. Thank you all.

Our Annual General Meeting is coming soon and if you would like to become a member of the Committee, this is your opportunity to put your name forward.

Enjoy your holiday and see you all in September.

Margaret Walker

From the Conductor



I think we all walked away from Cheltenham Town hall on Saturday 19th May feeling very positive about our performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*. You had every reason to feel satisfied – this was an occasion where everything finally came right on the day and the choir's singing was really memorable for its quality. You put so much into it and I know that many of you found the whole experience highly enjoyable but also very moving. One of the greatest benefits for the choir was that the

orchestra did not overwhelm you! This is partly due to Elgar's skilful orchestration, but also to your powerful and exuberant singing.

The quality of the professional musicians who joined us was outstanding. It was a particular pleasure to work with James Gilchrist, and it would be difficult to find the role of Gerontius sung better than that anywhere. James is at the peak of his career, with many concert appearances (including twice at both this year's Proms and Three Choirs Festival) and recordings, with many accolades wherever he appears. Our mezzo soprano, Serena Kay, turned out to be an Angel in more ways than one as she saved the day with a superb performance. Derek Welton had a powerfully resonant voice, just right for the role of the Priest/Angel of Agony, and I'm sure we will hear more of him in the future. The Regency Sinfonia was the best grouping of musicians under that name that I have ever heard, a view shared by their leader Robert Bishop (himself a former co-leader of the BBC Symphony Orchestra). They just knew the piece well from start to finish and gave confidence to all the singers.

The happiness and success of that occasion was tinged with sadness when we learnt of the death of our President, Anita Hewitt-Jones, just a week later. *The Dream of Gerontius* was the last concert she ever attended, perhaps a fitting conclusion to her long and distinguished career as a musician. She leaves a hugely talented family of musicians, some of whom we heard at her funeral; thank you to those who sang on that occasion. Anita was very much a "hands on" President, equally happy singing in the choir, attending committee meetings or enjoying a coffee morning at the Stanton Room. She introduced the choir to her husband Tony Hewitt-Jones' music and we twice performed his *Seven Sea Poems* with great satisfaction. We shall miss Anita greatly.

Thank you also to those who sang in the summer concert. St Peter's turned out to be a good venue and a substantial audience was treated to an interesting mix of music.

Having already gained a head start on John Rutter's *Requiem*, we shall be

performing it in full on November 24th along with Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man – A Mass for Peace*. This is a work very much in vogue at the moment, quite unlike anything else we have sung, and I am sure you will enjoy its varying moods with its mixed text of Latin and English. This concert, accompanied by a small ensemble of musicians, will be in Holy Apostles' Church, so perhaps there will be a feeling of having "come home" at the end of our anniversary year!

Future concert programmes are given below, and you will see (in the May concerts of 2008 and 2009) that I am seizing the opportunity of performing the slightly lesser known works of two fine composers (i.e. we are having a change from *Messiah* and *The Creation!*). Please put these dates in your diaries now and commit yourselves to as many rehearsals as you can possibly manage.

Looking forward to seeing you all again on 5th September.

John Wright



Diary Dates

(concerts in **bold**)

2007

Wed 5 Sep First rehearsal

Wed 26 Sep AGM

(after rehearsal break)

**Sat 24 Nov Rutter Requiem
Jenkins The Armed Man
(Holy Apostles')**

Sat 8 Dec Christmas Market
(Stanton Room)

**Sat 15 Dec Family Carol Concert
(St Mary's)**

2008

Wed 9 Jan Resume rehearsals

**Sat 17 May Handel Samson
(All Saints')**

**Sat 29 Nov Rossini Petite Messe Solenne
(All Saints')**

**Sat 20 Dec Family Carol Concert
(St Mary's)**

2009

**Sat 16 May Haydn The Seasons
(Pittville Pump Room)**

Situations Vacant in the Market team

For many years, both in Spring and Autumn, CKCS has held a Saturday market in the Stanton Room at Charlton Kings Library. This year, several members of the market team have decided to retire after years of faithful service; as a result of this, we shall not be running an Autumn Market in October 2007, there wasn't time to find enough people to take on the responsibilities of stall-holders.

It will be a break with tradition if we are not able to continue these popular local markets. Remembering that, as a Society, we strive to maintain our strong village connections and hold regular functions which include the local community, the end of the markets would not only mean that less funds would be raised from outside the choir but also that our local profile would be lowered. Some of our patrons and ex-CKCS members are regular customers, the markets are a good way to keep in touch.

How about volunteering for the next market? No previous experience is necessary – choir members helping at markets in the past have been amazed to find that they have unexpected talents as salespeople. None of us had done this kind of thing before – all you need is a smile and a willingness to talk with the customers. Co-opt a friend to volunteer with you – it is more fun to run a stall with someone you know well.

There are vacancies for the following stalls: Books & Audio (traditionally run by a man because the books are heavy to carry around), Bric-a-Brac, House & Garden, Kids' Stuff, Coffee & a Slice. If you have an alternative idea for a stall that you would like to run, please come forward and we will give it a go. We shall also need help from the men to set up and dismantle the tables on the day.

The Spring Market is scheduled for Saturday, March 15th and we need to know before the end of the Autumn term whether we can go ahead with it.

The emphasis is on the word VOLUNTEER. Please. This is your opportunity to help keep the cost of your annual subscription down.

Helen Wilby

CKCS 1957 to 2007

John Ricketts has taken on the task of issuing a book to celebrate the fifty years of the Choral society. Many interesting articles have been submitted and John has found it very inspiring to put this book together.

The book will be published later this year and we hope that ALL members of the Choir will help to sell all the copies. We thank John for the effort he has put into this.

The Charmony Singers

We are a small group of ladies from the choir who sing at weddings, funerals etc. The revenue we raise helps in fundraising for the choir. If you would like to join this group, please contact Margaret Walker. If you know of anyone looking for a choir to sing at a function, again please do let us know.

Getting the notes right

There are two useful aids for note-bashing at the start of a new work.

ChoraLine rehearsal cassettes and CDs of Jenkins' *The Armed Man* will be available for hire next term at £4 from Ann Hookey. These are produced with separate instrumental sounds for each part (SATB). The "target" voice is on the right speaker and all other parts are on the left, so the right-hand sound can be increased at will. A spoken voice guides you comprehensively through the tape, giving bar numbers and page numbers.

In addition, if your computer has an audio facility, you can **listen on-line** to the Rutter *Requiem* in similar format (but unfortunately, not Jenkins' *The Armed Man*) at www.cyberbass.com

And finally...

Come back, come back Horatius

That is to say, we take quite hard The absence of our favourite bard.

OUCH!