



### FROM THE CO- CHAIRS

A Happy New Year to you all.

We are very much enjoying rehearsals for the concert in March. We are delighted that Brian Kay, our President, is returning to conduct. He will be taking the final rehearsals. Tom Moore, our Accompanist and Deputy Director, is acting as chorus master, and doing a wonderful job, whilst David Lawrence is heavily engaged in his annual January/February stint with Young Voices. Tom has been assisted by Alex Berry and by Ed Jones, Directors of Music at Bradford and Wakefield Cathedrals respectively.



The Puccini *Messa di Gloria*, twice postponed at the eleventh hour due to Covid, is (or should be...) well known to us. Gounod's *St Cecilia Mass*, at least on the basis of a show of hands at our first rehearsal, is not. Very few singers knew the work. It is Brian's choice and we are delighted to have been introduced to it. We hope to impress him with our progress when he arrives to take command of rehearsals.

We had a very enjoyable and well-received November concert in at St. Wilfrid's and we were back in the Royal Hall for *Messiah*, both concerts being conducted by David. His first Harrogate *Messiah*. Our Christmas concert with HSO saw a full house in the Conference Centre for the final conducting appearance of our much loved and respected Deputy Director, Marilynne Davies, who is retiring from that post at the end of this Season.

Some of you might have noticed that concert reviews are no longer published in the local press. We were given to understand that this will henceforth be the case and so we are no longer commissioning reviews. We do however rather miss the ceremonial reading after each concert...

We look forward very much to seeing you at our March concert.

Best Wishes  
Paul and Amy

### FORTHCOMING CONCERTS

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March**

**Gounod - *St Cecilia Mass* and Puccini - *Messa di Gloria***  
In the Royal Hall, Harrogate  
Conducted by HCS President Brian Kay

Online ticket sales – follow this link

<https://www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk/events/gounod-st-cecilia-mass-puccini-messa-di-gloria/>

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June**

**The Harrogate Prom (new date)**  
in Harrogate Convention Centre

Online ticket sales – follow this link

<https://www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk/events/the-harrogate-proms/>

Tickets for both concerts can also be booked in person at the Harrogate Theatre box office, by phoning them on 01423 502116 or by enlisting the help of our in house ticket sales team – please email Norman at [tickets@harrogatechoral.org.uk](mailto:tickets@harrogatechoral.org.uk)

## COMMITTEE REPORT

### **Admin Matters**

We are in discussion as to next Season's programme which should be decided shortly. We are after Easter rehearsing at King James School in Knaresborough in order to accommodate the 300 plus singers involved in this Season's Proms concert. Covid remains a concern but at significantly less so. Health and Safety remains important.

### **Sponsorship and Fundraising**

We have lodged an application to the Bramall Foundation, upon whose much needed and generous support we rely, for funding for a further three years.

Fundraising events including cake stalls, book exchanges and a weekly wine raffle continue to raise valuable funds. The 100 Club has not yet returned but will do so we hope. Tea breaks have now made a welcome return with contribution payments gratefully accepted.

Audiences remain at a reduced level. We have not yet returned to pre-Covid levels. We are at around 80%. This is impacting upon our balance sheet. In addition costs are rising everywhere. We need to balance our books.

### **Marketing**

We have switched our focus to online marketing from press advertising. We are monitoring progress. In terms of numbers of people reached against the cost, the figures so far are very good.

### **Membership update**

We have in the region of 130 members, the number fluctuates. Tenors and Basses number 11 and 24 respectively. David advises that ideally Tenors and Basses together should make up one third of the choir, with a few more Basses than Tenors. We are still a little undersubscribed with Tenors and Basses. We are of course not the only choir in that position but we remain very open to enquiries by potential new members and if anyone knows of any interested singers please don't hesitate to pass on Paul's contact details [pauljackson57@gmail.com](mailto:pauljackson57@gmail.com) or encourage interested parties to visit our website [www.harrogatechoral.org.uk](http://www.harrogatechoral.org.uk) to enquire about Membership.

## **What to do with a blank space??**

Looking back at old editions of the Choral Newsletter seemed like a plan to fill the blank space. There were of course earlier editions stored on paper only but the first version held digitally dates from October 2001 and includes articles on concert dress as it seemed standards were slipping - in those days ladies wore long black skirts with shirt style white blouses which had to be worn tucked in!

By January 2002 we were concerned with finding a new rehearsal venue as Harrogate Ladies college were asking us to move out. Also the first amusing article by Bass Charles Nightingale appeared – let's hope this inspires him to start contributing again!!

Ruth

## A Trio of Magnificats 13 November 2022

Held in St Wilfrid's Church on Remembrance Sunday this was a memorable concert featuring young soloists from The Royal Northern College of Music, with whom we hope to build closer links, together Soprano Susanna Fairbairn and an orchestra of local professional musicians put together under the name Pro Musica with the kind and invaluable help of John Dunford, Musical Director of Ripon Choral Society.

The concert opened with Paul Ayres' Echo Magnificat, featuring Susanna Fairbairn with the choir echoing the same line a few beats behind Susanna. The singers were accompanied by the strings from the orchestra. This was followed by Bach's Magnificat, a work conceived on a grand scale with five soloists and a five part choir. The ten verses and Gloria form a continuous and homogenous whole, in contrast with the libretto of an oratorio or Passion. There are no recitatives, instead the chorus sing the more emphatic sections while the more reflective verses are assigned to the soloists. It was a delight to hear the four young singers from the RNCM as well as Susanna. In the final verse Bach appropriately mirrors the words by recalling the music that was heard 'as it was in the beginning' and his *Magnificat* ended the first half of the concert with true exuberance.

After the interval the choir and Susanna returned to perform John Rutter's interpretation, his inspiration being none other than that of JS Bach. While Bach structured the first verses of the canticle in several movements of different scoring, Rutter unites the first three verses in one choral movement. The principal similarity being that both composers recall music in the final movement which was heard in the first.

This concert was particularly well-received as we know from audience feedback and a joy to sing. St Wilfrid's was the perfect venue. Pro Musica were a a delight to work with.

Ruth



## The Harrogate Christmas Concert 3 December 2022



A heart-warmingly enthusiastic full house celebrated a truly civic event. There can be few communities which can stage a production such as Harrogate put on. Performers, that is to say orchestra, choir and schools, numbered the best part of 500, before an audience of some 1500. The packed arena was awash with light and colour. And of course with music. From the moment the HSO swung into Sleigh Ride under the festive baton of Bryan Western the Christmas mood was struck.

The choir's performance of the Reindeer on the Roof dance routine was its best yet, as indeed was that of the audience. The variety of antlers, flashing red noses, elf caps and outsize glittery Edna Everage glasses was, in the case of the latter quite literally, spectacular. And that was just HCS. The choir shone, not least in its very well-received unaccompanied performance of Three Kings, with soloist Dan Hutton in great voice. Beati, our small choir of Sopranos and Altos, despite being forced into late tactical changes produced a true team performance and rose to the occasion majestically. Santa duly arrived, fashionably late, high-fiving younger members of the audience and planting an unexpected smacker of a kiss on the Mayor.

Our very own Marilynne Davies who, together with Bryan Western, created this annual Harrogate fixture over twenty years ago and has so very generously devoted to it limitless effort, time and professional enthusiasm, took her final curtain call. She bowed out in consummate style, an elegant and polished performance to the end.

Paul

## Handel – Messiah 10 December 2022

This was David Lawrence's first Messiah with HCS and it was another splendid concert accompanied by the always excellent Manchester Camerata together with Soprano Kathryn Jenkin (note - not Jenkins who is a Mezzo!), Mezzo Gaynor Keeble, Tenor David Woods (whose father was once Chairman of HCS) and Baritone Andrew Mayor.

David noted afterwards that he hoped that we had enjoyed singing with the Camerata as much as he had enjoyed working with them. He was very pleased with the choir's performance and we know, again from emails received, that the audience very much enjoyed the choir's role in the concert. Gaynor Keeble received particular praise.

Our audience numbers held up, all things considered, reasonably well against the competing attractions of Il Divo at the Convention Centre and the televised England World Cup match. It had been suggested, in jest I think, or at least I hope, that we show the game live during the performance using giant screens positioned around the Royal Hall. This would have had, it was maintained, the welcome side-effect of ensuring that more of us sang whilst looking up with our heads out of our copies. Yes, but no...

This annual event holds, rightly, a special place in the hearts of choirs such as ours. Amy and I noted in the concert programme that many of us possess copies of this work marked with year upon year of annotations. When we perform Messiah we inevitably think back to previous years and to all those former HCS colleagues with whom we have had the pleasure to sing.

Paul



## Christmas Night Out

There are I hope a number of HCS Christmas outings. One that I do know about is the Soprano Christmas meal organised by First Soprano Voice Representative Sally Jackson, assisted by Emma Littlewood. The invitation has through popular demand been extended to cover both First and Second Sopranos. Sally tells me that a very good time was had at La Feria and she thanks everyone for their support and enthusiasm. ‘



A hardcore detachment, with Co-Chair Amy inevitably involved, apparently found themselves later elsewhere in town assisting with karaoke classics. This too is becoming a regular HCS event. We have, thanks to the ever vigilant eye of our official photographer Ernesto Rogata, the relevant evidence from a post-concert party in the same establishment involving a Soprano group, still in concert dress, last Season. Obviously this photographic evidence couldn't ever be made public...

Paul

## Tom Moore Leeds Recital

We are rightly proud to have a Deputy Director and Accompanist of such talent and background as Tom and it was no surprise to see that HCS was well represented amongst those who attended his very impressive lunchtime organ recital at Leeds Cathedral in the autumn. A wonderfully varied programme in a beautiful setting before a good audience. An enjoyable hour and very well done Tom.

The programme was

- Norman Cocker** Tuba tune
- Herbert Howells** Rhapsody No 1
- Nicolaus Bruhns** Praeludium in G
- Reginald Goss-Custard** Chelsea Fayre
- Louis Lefébure-Wèly** Boléro de Concert
- Alexandre Guilmant** Fantasy on two English melodies

Paul



## Carol Singing



Co-Chair Amy was instrumental also in arranging for a small group to sing carols at the Harrogate Christmas Market, with Marilynne Davies leading the fray. This was very good fun. For the singers at least. What the shoppers made of it is not known but they seemed to be enjoying it and we certainly added to the festive atmosphere.

As will be seen Santa was particularly enthusiastic and on a beautifully crisp and sunny morning it was a very worthwhile community event. The backing track obtained by Amy produced one or two mild surprises for the singers but very little stops HCS once we get warmed up and we were as will be seen conveniently positioned next to the Bratwurst stall. At least two of our Committee members took advantage.

Paul



## This Newsletter

Just a reminder that this newsletter now goes out three times a year – an Autumn edition in October, Winter edition in January/February and a Spring/Summer edition in May. If there is more you would like to read in this newsletter, or if you have a contribution then do let us know by getting in touch with Carolyn, the Friends Secretary – email [friends@harrogatechoral.org.uk](mailto:friends@harrogatechoral.org.uk)