



FRIENDS NEWS

Issue 18 Autumn 2023



FROM THE CO- CHAIRS

We must open with an apology for the delay in publishing this Newsletter. The year has flown by. But what a great few months it has been for HCS.

Our Spring and Summer concerts could not have been more of a contrast. The performance of the Gounod/Puccini concert in March was a magical experience for all involved. Brian Kay, our President, conducted us at the Royal Hall and I know from talking to colleagues that many felt this concert to have been an absolute highlight of their time with HCS.



The huge June concert, performed together with other choirs and singers in the Convention Centre, alongside HSO, was a great success, with David Lawrence and Bryan Western combining to produce a very exciting performance of Proms classics in an event which surpassed all expectations in raising over £27,000.00 for the Harrogate Hospital & Community Charity.

In the meantime our application to the Bramall Foundation for further, increased funding, was successful and we remain very grateful indeed to the Bramalls for their continuing generous support.

These are not easy times, financially, for choirs. A combination of the pandemic, with its negative impact upon audience numbers, together with inflation-impacted costs, have rendered the task of keeping our heads above water much more difficult. So far, HCS has succeeded, but we are proceeding with caution. Happily, choir numbers are holding up very well indeed. We continue to attract new singers.

There are changes afoot at all levels. Marilynne Davies has stepped down from her role as Deputy Director, but will be continuing as both a Trustee and of course as our Vice-President. Words cannot adequately portray the enormous debt that is owed by HCS to Marilynne.

We are hoping very much that Tom Moore, our other Deputy Director, will be staying with us despite his appointment, to what is a very prestigious position in the choral world, as Music Director at St. Matthew's in Northampton.

Anthony Grey, the MD at St. Wilfrid's in Harrogate and Assistant MD at Bradford Cathedral, who has also recently been appointed to lead Halifax Choral Society will be joining us in January and February to assist with rehearsals whilst David is touring with Young Voices. Anthony is also being appointed to take over leadership on a long term basis of our smaller, Soprano/Alto choir, Beati, which was founded by, and has hitherto been led by, Marilynne.

Other changes include a change in our triennial voice reassessments, which have been redesigned by David to reduce the fear factor whilst promoting a more holistic, choral approach. In addition we are basing ourselves in the very beautiful St. Wilfrid's for the majority of our 23/24 concerts, with a view to reducing costs and reassessing the financial horizon. The Trustees are in the process of assessing input from our Members into the first stage of a strategic review looking at every aspect of the direction in which the choir is travelling.

We hope very much to see you, our Friends and fellow-travellers, at our concerts this Season.

Lastly, our Friends Secretary, Carolyn Johnston, to whom we owe much thanks for her work and support over the last seven years is retiring from that position. We will be appointing a new Secretary. In the meantime, I know that you will all join me in expressing our appreciation. Thank you, Carolyn.

Best Wishes, Paul and Amy

COMMITTEE REPORT

These reflect matters discussed at our last meeting in May

Admin Matters

The rehearsals at King James are going well and the space is good for such large numbers. There is a lot to sort out for the Proms concert!!

All current Trustees are willing to stand for re-election at the AGM but it was noted that Marilynne is now stepping down as Deputy Music Director, the Committee thanked her for all the years of work she has given in this role.

Fees, Ticket Prices and Subs were discussed and in an effort to increase audience sizes it was agreed to reduce ticket prices for concerts in St Wilfrids to £15 and for the Royal Hall to go back to two levels, £25 for the Grand Circle and £18 for the Grand Hall / Dress Circle. With the usual £5 tickets for students and under 16s at either. It was also agreed to raise Member subs this year – have kept them frozen previously.

Sponsorship and Fundraising

At the time of the meeting we were still waiting to hear the result of our application to the Bramall Foundation, post meeting note that we were grateful during the early summer to hear that our application had been successful.

Treasurer Gill noted that while we are rehearsing at King James we cannot hold our regular fundraising events such as cake stalls, book exchanges and the weekly wine raffle. We will be without this income until the start of the 2023-24 season.

Membership update

Several of the singers who have joined us for the Proms have expressed an interest in joining. The Tenors and Basses voice test date in late June might have time to accommodate them.

Future Seasons

Plans for the 2023-24 season were being held in draft until the outcome of the Bramall funding was resolved. The concerts are

Saturday 28 October 2023 at 3pm	Voices and Organ (the music of Britain and France) In St Wilfrids Church
Saturday 2 December 2023 at 6pm	The Harrogate Christmas Concert In Harrogate Convention Centre
Saturday 9 December 2023 at 7pm	Handel – Messiah In the Royal Hall
Saturday 20 April 2024 at 7pm	CircleSong (and other works) In St Wilfrids Church
Saturday 15 June 2024 at 7pm	Leonardo In St Wilfrids Church

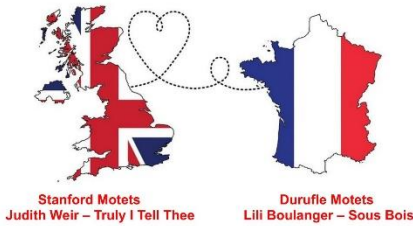
Tickets for all concerts are on sale from the Harrogate Box Office Tel 01423 502166 or online at <https://www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk/whats-on/>

Our Next Two Concerts

 Harrogate Choral Society

VOICES AND ORGAN

Music from Britain and France
Including



Stanford Motets
Judith Weir – Truly I Tell Thee

Durufle Motets
Lili Boulanger – Sous Bois

Organ solos & much more
With Thomas Moore, Organ
Conducted by David Lawrence

St Wilfrids Church, Harrogate
Saturday 28 October 2023 at 3pm

Tickets £15
(£5 for under 16s and students)
From the Harrogate Box Office, Tel 01423 502116
online at www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk & on the door

www.harrogatechoral.org.uk

Registered Charity 1164776

We are planning a lovely concert of choral and organ music from Britain and France.

After many requests from choir members we are testing the water with an afternoon concert to make it suitable for all the family.

Our Deputy Music Director and Principal Accompanist Tom Moore will be playing the organ and David Lawrence our Music Director will be conducting.

Tickets are just £15 and can be bought online here

<https://www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk/events/harrogate-choral-society-voices-and-organ/>

Then in December we move to the Royal Hall for everyone's favourite Messiah

With Soloists Sarah Fox, Soprano

Gaynor Keeble, Mezzo

James Micklethwaite, Tenor

& Andrew Mayor, Bass

With the National Festival Orchestra

And of course conducted by David Lawrence

Tickets are £18 and £25 and can be bought online here

<https://www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk/events/handel-messiah-harrogate-choral-society/>



HARROGATE
CHORAL SOCIETY

G F HANDEL
MESSIAH

National Festival Orchestra
Anna Devin, Soprano
Gaynor Keeble, Mezzo
James Micklethwaite, Tenor
Andrew Mayor, Bass
Conducted by David Lawrence

Royal Hall
Harrogate
9 December 2023
at 7pm

Tickets £25, £18
(students and under 16s £5)
from the Harrogate Box Office
Tel 01423 502116
online at www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk

www.harrogatechoral.org.uk Registered Charity 1164776

Review – Puccini and Gounod 11 March 2023

THIRD TIME LUCKY

Having been thwarted twice by Covid from performing the Puccini *Messa di Gloria*, finally on Saturday 11 March 2023 the principal choir of the Harrogate Choral Society was able to sing this particularly glorious “Gloria” in the Royal Hall, Harrogate. This time partnered with Gounod’s *Messe Solennelle de Sainte Cecile* (St Cecilia Mass) instead of the previously planned accompaniment of Rossini.



This performance was well worth the wait with the choir, three excellently balanced soloists – Georgie Malcolm, Soprano; Richard Dowling, Tenor and Alex Ashworth, Baritone, and the Manchester Camerata all in excellent form under the baton of the HCS President Brian Kay.

The first half of the concert featured the Gounod which was completely new to most of the choir. It is a superb work for singers which starts with the choir singing a gentle Kyrie, then joined by soloists, before rising to a beautiful crescendo, with soprano Georgie soaring over the choir, before coming to a peaceful conclusion. Each following movement was equally superb with choir and soloists singing in partnership. The first few movements are in the secular style of church music but as the work progresses Gounod’s operatic leanings are made evident. His outstanding gift for composing enthralling melodies certainly shone throughout all the movements, displaying a skilled blend of sacred and secular styles.

Particular mention should be made to the woodwind section of the Manchester Camerata who so beautifully accompanied Tenor Richard and Baritone Alex in their various solos. The work concludes with *Agnus Dei* ending peacefully on a swelling amen.

The second half of the concert comprised the long awaited Puccini, featuring just the tenor and baritone soloists. Due to the previous set backs the choir had ample time to rehearse this work and this was evident in the performance. Brian Kay opted to perform the *Gloria* at the end of the work rather than as the traditional second movement and this made for a suitably grand ending for this very operatic work.

The *Gloria* itself is a joyful hymn of praise and Puccini’s composition was written as his graduation thesis. It is therefore an unmistakably youthful work, but shows a mature grasp of musical conventions and is evidence of his operatic promise. In the *Credo* tenor Richard sang a wonderfully sensitive *Et Incarnatus Est*, accompanied by the choir. Baritone Alex’s turn came in the *Benedictus* and he also sang superbly. Both joined the choir in the peaceful *Agnus Dei* before the work concluded with the *Gloria* in appropriately glorious style.

It is such a shame that the weather prevented many from attending this concert as it will certainly remain in the memories of those there as one of the best Harrogate Choral Society has presented.

Anita Seaman

Some Images from The Proms concert
24 June 2023

