



## FRIENDS NEWS

Issue 19 January 2024



### FROM THE CO- CHAIRS



Welcome to the Spring edition of our Newsletter. Apologies for the slightly delayed delivery.

Since our last Newsletter we have performed two concerts and taken part as usual in the Christmas concert together with Harrogate Symphony Orchestra and quite a few schoolchildren.



There is a short review of our October concert at St Wilfrid's included below, it was a lovely event, and the venue was perfect with its very good acoustic. I wanted to mention however that there was very positive feedback, thank you, about the afternoon staging of the concert. We had a good audience and it was clear that the early start, coupled with the lower pricing of tickets, had attracted additional numbers. For unforeseen reasons our interval lasted rather longer than usual. I should apologise to audience members who had to queue for some time for a cup of tea, but it did afford the opportunity for us to talk to you all and was actually a very sociable and enjoyable gathering.

You will see that this Newsletter includes a piece written by one of our singers, describing her experience of taking part in a Messiah concert for the first time. I will only add that it was a very good evening, with great soloists and an excellent performance from the National Festival Orchestra, with whom we hope to stage more concerts. And, thank you everyone, a very good audience. We were delighted that so many attended and we were there together in numbers which were almost back to pre-pandemic levels.

Our Spring concert is again at St. Wilfrid's, and again it will be an afternoon concert. Details are included below.

Amy and I hope to meet up with you again in the, possibly shorter, interval at St Wilfrid's on 15th April.

Paul and Amy

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## COMMITTEE REPORT

**These reflect matters discussed at our last two meetings in September 2023 and January 2024**

**Admin Matters** – the period from May to the end of the 22-23 season was one of the busiest in living memory due to the Proms concert but it had all been worth it in the end. At the January meeting it was noted that Ruth was stepping down as Business Manager at the end of the season and Gill was stepping down as Treasurer at the same time. Paul and Amy had decided they would like, at least for now, to share the Business Manager duties. Filling the Treasurer role is proving as expected to be more difficult. However potential new Trustees are to be approached with a view to filling other roles. As usual various policies had been reviewed and were approved at both meetings and Katharine had updated the action plan. The summary and full reports from the Brainstorming exercise had been circulated to all members. The Making Music Platform system had been considered and it was agreed that we should apply to use it as it should simplify several of our current processes.

**Sponsorship and Fundraising** – we were delighted that the application for funding from the Bramall foundation had been successful. As a result Paul and Gill were able to resolve David Lawrence's contract and also agree rates for pay for Deputy Music Directors and Accompanists

### **Various updates**

**Safeguarding** - Committee members and officials of HCS had been undertaking safeguarding training and as young people will be involved in the April concert a BOPA will be applied for

**Beati** – Anthony Gray, who was recently appointed as the musical lead for Beati, has been working with the existing members to audition a number of potential new members.

**Membership** – Anna Thornhill Jones is now the voice rep for first altos and as vocal mentor is helping Dee with the organisation of voice tests.

### **Other**

**Bob Chilcott rehearsal** – we had the opportunity to have Bob take a rehearsal and following a successful application to the Postlewaite trust it was agreed this would be a day rehearsal on 23<sup>rd</sup> March in the hall at Harrogate Ladies College singing Circlesong in preparation for our concert with guests invited for a fee of £20.

**Taylor Scott Davis** – more or less at the same time we were offered the opportunity for American composer TSD to come and take a rehearsal to introduce us to some of his music which David hopes to feature in the future. The timing for this happened to be in the same week! And will take place on 20<sup>th</sup> March in our normal rehearsal venue with guests paying a fee of £10.

**Looking Ahead** – we have booked Tennants of Leyburn for our Messiah on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

## MEET OUR NEW FRIENDS OF HCS SECRETARY, SUE DUCKWORTH



Hello, I am Sue Duckworth, the new Friends Secretary. I have taken over from Caroline who did a brilliant job for five years!

I have been with the Choral Society for almost two years and sing with the first Altos. I have loved the pieces we have sung in my time but am especially proud of the Magnificats concert and the two Messiahs I have been part of.

I am looking forward to working with our Management Team to see what other benefits we can offer to our Friends.

## ALTO SOCIAL REVIEW

As Christmas was approaching, the altos were feeling in a festive mood and it was decided that it should not be just the sopranos that have all the fun! We agreed on a post-Christmas outing as everyone was a little busy with pre-Christmas chaos.

Arrangements were taken into hand by Ann Shovelton, who managed to secure an evening at the Italian Connection. It was a perfectly sized venue for our gathering and Adele, the lovely smiley Manager, had opened especially for us so we had the whole place to ourselves (quite fortunate as the second altos turned out to be a rowdy lot!)

The food was delicious and much wine flowed but the best thing about the event was that everyone chatted to everyone, we all learned new names and more about the people we sit next to every Wednesday night. Thanks so much to Ann for organising the evening - I, for one, hope it will become a regular event.

Anna



## OUR NEXT TWO CONCERTS



Featuring Bob Chilcott's *Circlesong* and *Walking the Red Road*, with other works performed by the Scunthorpe Co-operative Junior Choir.

Both *Circlesong* and *Walking the Red Road* have links in the life of Native American peoples.

*Circlesong* – the major work – presents a complete life cycle based on Native American writings. Each of the thirteen movements focuses on a different stage of life, from birth and childhood through manhood and middle age to death. *Walking the Red Road* takes its theme from the Indian red Road which is a metaphor for living a spiritual way of life

Tickets are just £15 and can be bought online here <https://www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk/events/circlesong/#book>

In *Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine* composer Eric Whitacre and poet Charles Anthony Silvestri aim to conceptualize the sublime thoughts of renaissance genius Leonardo da Vinci, an artist but also a visionary whose mind conceived terrible engines of war such as tanks but also flying machines.

Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* is the best known of his works which were a revolution in musical conception.

The final work Cecilia MacDowell's *Da Vinci Requiem* presents an imaginative pairing of extracts from the notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci with texts from the Latin *Missa pro defunctis*.

Harrogate Choral Society will be joined by soloists Sara Trickey, Violin; Eleonore Cockerham, Soprano and Gareth Brynmor John, Baritone. They will be accompanied by the National Festival Orchestra and conducted by the HCS's Music Director David Lawrence.

Tickets are just £15 and can be bought online here <https://www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk/events/leonardo/#book>



## REVIEW – VOICES AND ORGAN – THE MUSIC OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE, 28 OCTOBER 2023

### MUSIC IN THE AFTERNOON

This was an afternoon concert - the decision taken by HCS to trial such a concert following comments that people did not like coming out after dark and also that evening concerts were not possible for young children.

A large audience, including quite a good number of young children, enjoyed an afternoon of lovely music including Truly I Tell you by Judith Weir (Master of the Kings Music), unaccompanied motets by Durufle - Ubi Caritas et Amor, Tota Pulchra Es, Tu Es Petrus and Tantum Ergo, and Stanford - Justorum Animae, Coelos Ascendit Hodie and Beatum Quorum Via. Further french music included Faure's Cantique de Jean Racine and Berlioz's Shepherds Farewell and delightful but not well-known piece - Sous Bois by Lili Boulanger - for which Thomas Moore moved from organ to piano. Included amongst the choir works were two organ solos by Tom - the first movement of Elgar's Organ Sonata Op28 and in the second half Bolero de Concert by Lefebure-Wely which was a truly joyful piece. The concert started with the well-known Zadok the Priest by Handel and ended in truly jubilant fashion by Parry's Blest Pair of Sirens - appreciated by one gentleman in the audience so much he sprang up to give a standing ovation!



Audience comments include

"Fabulous concert. I really enjoyed it. Tremendous first and last pieces bookending a more reflective middle. I loved the venue: easy to find and easy to park. Really appreciated an afternoon concert especially in the Autumn winter period"

"Just to let you know I thoroughly enjoyed yesterday's performance at St. Wilfrid's. The singing, the music, the conductor and the organist were exquisite! ... an afternoon performance ... why not? Far better and much more inspiring than shopping! Look forward to more performances"

"I came unconvinced. I mean, the afternoon? St Wilf's not the Royal Hall? An apparently disparate programme? Well, you won over this naysayer. The venue was right, the sound superb and the programming worked - David spoke long enough to be informative without veering into intrusive. The contrast of Stanford with Durufle was fascinating and to "bookend" the afternoon with Zadok and Sirens worked really well to boot. I reckon, a triumph."

"A wonderful event with stunning singing and a very interesting programme. I would support the idea of afternoon concerts, particularly in the dark winter and spring months, suitable for the profile of the audience, so much better to be going home in the late afternoon rather than late at night. The words of introduction from David Lawrence were splendid, not only "warming up" the audience but also providing information about the composers and a context to the individual pieces. All best wishes and congratulations again."

## THE HARROGATE CHRISTMAS CONCERT 2 DECEMBER 2023



Every year Harrogate Convention Centre fills with musicians young and old for The Christmas Event in Harrogate.

This year was no exception with nearly 350 primary school children joining forces with Harrogate Choral Society and Harrogate Symphony Orchestra in this family friendly concert.

As usual this year there were special guests – the ladies choir Beati, and of course not forgetting the most important man of all at that time of year who of course popped in in his red suit

## HANDEL – MESSIAH 9 DECEMBER 2023

Handel's Messiah is one the most well-known of choral works but it's popularity continues to draw audiences and despite the foul weather outside a nearly full house gathered in the Royal Hall, Harrogate to listen to this performance.

Harrogate Choral Society were accompanied for the first time by the National Festival Orchestra, Leader Sally Robinson. The choir sang their hearts out telling the story of Messiah - moving from Part One in



which the coming of the Messiah realises God's plan to redeem mankind - into the more serious Part Two in which the bible texts describe the accomplishment of redemption by the sacrifice of Jesus, mankind's rejection of God's offer, and then utter defeat trying to oppose the power of the Almighty - culminating in the Joyous Hallelujah chorus. (and yes, the audience stood!) Finally, Part Three which is a hymn of thanksgiving in which David Lawrence chose to start the Amen chorus quietly and thus the build to the end of the work was stupendous. Throughout the evening the orchestra played superbly and it is hoped they will appear again soon in Harrogate.

The four soloists were also well matched from the glittering high notes of Soprano Sarah Fox to the mellifluous tones of Mezzo Gaynor Keeble and the rich sounds of Bass Baritone Andrew Mayor but in many ways the star was the young tenor James Micklethwaite who performed with such pathos in "Thy Rebuke...".

This was one of the best Messiah performances heard recently, many positive comments have been received from the audience.

## JOINING THE ALTO SECTION OF HARROGATE CHORAL SOCIETY FROM MUNICH

As a German language assistant and music student, I was looking for a high-quality choir around Harrogate I could join during my stay in the UK. With Harrogate Choral Society, I found exactly what I was hoping for and even more. Everyone is very welcoming and the atmosphere during rehearsals is always relaxed and joyful. Meanwhile, HCS practices at a high level, which guarantees a remarkable result in the concerts. One of the concerts I had the pleasure in joining was Handel's Messiah. When entering the astonishing Royal Hall in Harrogate, I was overwhelmed by the beautiful and newly refurbished concert hall, its golden ornaments and red velvet seats. The place definitely fits the music with its great acoustic and I immediately had the feeling of experiencing something extraordinary.



As I had already sung several parts of the Messiah in German, it was a challenging and exciting experience to perform this well-known piece in English with HCS. The love and passion each member of the choir has for this amazing piece of music could be felt through and through. Seeing all the beaming faces in the crowd and feeling the energy that took hold of the choir while singing, is another proof of how music brings people together and enriches our lives. All in all, I consider myself very lucky to having had the chance of participating in this wonderful event, which will be one of the many happy memories I made and will still make with Harrogate Choral Society.

(Daniela from Munich, 22)

## WELCOME ANTHONY



We are delighted to welcome Anthony Gray to HCS. He is Director of Music of St Wilfrid's Church, Harrogate, Conductor and Artistic Director of Halifax Choral Society, and Sub-Organist and Assistant Director of Music at Bradford Cathedral. He has been appointed as Director of our smaller choir, Beati, and as a Deputy Director of Harrogate Choral Society.

Tom Moore and Anthony have been working hard together in our rehearsals for the April concert and they make an excellent team. David has been very pleased with the progress made in preparation. Anthony will, like Tom, be a great asset to HCS. With David at the helm we have a formidably talented triumvirate leading us and we are enjoying immensely our rehearsals for the Circlesong concert.

Welcome!!



## FINALLY ... HAVE YOUR SAY

Please let us have your contributions – if you have something you would like to add to this