

summer newsletter 2003

Wimbledon Choral Society

A Musical Feast and A Royal Coronation

www.wimbledon-choral.org.uk

Rambling Thoughts of a Chairman

What a spectacular start to the last season with the fantastic concert in Fairfield Halls consisting of Mendelssohn's triumphant Symphony No.2 *Lobgesang* (*Hymn of Praise*) and Sir William Walton's taxing yet



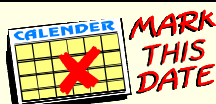
thrilling *Belshazzar's Feast* (2002 being the centenary of Walton's birth). Singing to a near-packed hall we had excellent feedback from members of the audience and it was another highly successful joint venture with Croydon Philharmonic Choir and the New Queen's Hall Orchestra, a partnership that was to repeat itself later in the season. There was no

doubt that the workshop day at Dulwich College (at no extra charge to WCS members) in preparation of this concert had been a good move as it enabled us to focus on many of the difficult and challenging passages in both pieces. On the concert day itself we all worked very hard to deliver a tremendous result although I believe most of us were exhausted by the end of it all and perhaps that took the edge off it slightly. Feedback from some members indicated as such and maybe the intensity of the afternoon's rehearsal had taken it out of us a little. Of course, there was also immense pressure on both Michael

and David Gibson to complete the rehearsal within the time available for the orchestra. No mean feat! Still, top marks to everyone for the terrific effort put in.

A couple of weeks earlier we had the privilege of having participated in the Royal British Legion's Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall for the third year running. Those of you who have taken part in one or more of these events will remember the experience for a long time, I am sure. As mentioned last year, though, it is RBL policy to revise the music format and content on a regular basis and, regretfully, we will not be participating in this year's event in November 2003. However, the Director of Music for the RBL has expressed his sincere thanks to the members of WCS for their commitment and professional approach over the three years.

Christmas saw us return once again to St. Paul's Church in Southfields for our annual Carol Concert following our successful visit there the previous year. As before, tickets were sold out within a couple of weeks for this popular event and there wasn't a spare seat to be had on the night. The choir's President, Ian Partridge CBE, sang beautifully as ever and also we were delighted to have Prunella Scales with us. We will be returning to St. Paul's for Christmas 2003 which, I believe, is a decision favoured by most members.



**New season starts on
Monday 1st September @
7:30pm**

(The Last) Proms in the Garden

Saturday 13 Sept 2003
Gates open 5pm for 7.30pm

35 The Warren
Carshalton Beeches
Surrey
Tel: 020 8642 7880

Bring your friends, drinks,
a picnic and your voice!

Tickets £10 (kids free)



Our spring concert found us in a new venue, the Concert Hall of the Royal College of Music, just behind the Royal Albert Hall. We received wonderful positive feedback from the audience about this and we really put on a great show. The venue allowed us to perform with a full orchestra (once again, the NQHO, who played brilliantly) on a proper concert stage but it was rather limited in that the audience capacity was around 475 and we know we could have sold another 50 or more tickets. In addition, the stage did somewhat dominate the Hall and some members felt that the sound may have been a bit too much for the audience. Having said that, we have to remember that this is a concert venue within a College and is designed and equipped to suit the College's educational and training purposes and not those of hirers like us. On balance, though, I thought it a very good venue and would hope that we could return one day.



Cheques payable to Juniper Fundraisers at the above address. Proceeds to be distributed between Breakthrough Breast Cancer, The Orchid Appeal (testicular and prostate cancer) and Wimbledon Choral Society.

In last year's newsletter, I shared with you the plans for the series of concerts in partnership with the NQHO and Croydon Philharmonic Choir celebrating the Golden Jubilee of HM The Queen's Coronation in 1953. We were to launch the series in the South East with 3, possibly 4, concerts in several venues. John Boyden, Artistic Director of the NQHO, worked tirelessly to set the series up but in the end he was unable to get the support, financial and otherwise, required to make it all a reality and it ended up with only two concerts being performed in the whole series, Fairfield Halls and Guildford Cathedral. They were very good concerts with us performing splendid examples of celebratory music like Parry's *I was Glad* and Walton's inspired *Te Deum*. What was disappointing was the size of the audience in both concerts. However, since these events were being promoted by the NQHO it really was down to them to market the concerts and, actually, the bulk of the audience at the Fairfield Halls was sourced through the two choirs. Consequently, the NQHO are likely to have made a significant financial loss on the two concerts. It highlighted the importance of choir members publicising our concerts and making every effort to sell tickets. Our own survival as a choir depends on encouraging more people to come and listen to our concerts. (See Tilly's Ticket Tips on page 4).



Two musicians are walking down the street, and one says to the other, "Who was that piccolo I saw you with last night?". The other replies, "That was no piccolo, that was my fife."

As in previous years, we rounded off the year with another highly enjoyable and well-attended Quiz Night with William G Stewart in control. I would like to record my sincere thanks to Hilary Leacock for stepping into June's shoes this year and organising the event with such tremendous attention to detail and success. Well done, indeed.

Overall, then, it has been a wonderful mix of music this past season and I hope you have enjoyed it also. It was pleasing to see membership levels remain high with a regular intake of new members of all age groups, all of whom are very welcome. Being called Chairman is just a title. However, I wouldn't be able to chair anything unless I had a strong and willing team around me. I am particularly grateful for the work and support of the committee, both the full team and the smaller executive group, together with those who perform other tasks within the operation of this choir. Secondly, we are so fortunate to have the excellent skills and musical leadership from Michael, Tim and Norman. These gentlemen always manage to guide us, an amateur choir, to reaching high quality professional performances and yet still retain that sense of fun.

And, of course, the biggest thanks go to you, the members of this choir. You make this choir what it is and you, in the end, decide in which direction it ought to go. The more you can put into it, then more we can do. The more you can share what has to be done, the easier and better it is for all. What skills do you have to offer that could help the choir move forward? What can you do? Who do you know? What do you know? How can you help us?

We have some challenging years ahead of us and I do hope you will continue to enjoy being a part of this great choir as we look for different ways of expressing our love of choral music and bringing it to a wider audience through performances. Thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm. Wimbledon Choral Society just would not be the same without you.



My Mum won't take me to concerts anymore - she says there's too much sax and violins.

Coming soon to a Concert Hall near you!



Monday 24 November 2003
Fairfield Halls, Croydon
Karl Jenkins
"The Armed Man (L'Homme Armé)"

Wimbledon Choral Society
In partnership with Dulwich College
Choir and Orchestra.



This recent work is the result of a special millennial commission from the Royal Armouries and the latest in a six century old tradition of "Armed Man" masses that take the fifteenth century French song "L'Homme Armé" as their starting point.

In a manner reminiscent of Britten's War Requiem, "The Armed Man" interpolates a number of different texts set within a fairly typical Christian Mass form. However, texts taken from Malory, Dryden, Swift, Tennyson, Kipling, The Koran and the Hindu Mahābhārata contribute to a compelling account of the descent into and terrible consequences of war.



So What's Coming Up?

You may be aware that we had planned to do Verdi's *Requiem* in November and probably Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* early next year. This was entirely subject to (a) the financial plan for the season being accepted and (b) the continued participation of a charity in the Bach concert. Alas, the charity decided to pull out because of too many other commitments and this rendered the whole season financially unstable if the programme remained as was. Consequently, we had to reshape the music programme but believe that we now have a tremendous selection of choral works for the 2003-2004 season for you.



Wagner's music has beautiful moments but some bad quarters of an hour.
[Attrib. Rossini]

Beethoven had an ear for music.

In consultation with Michael, we have kept the Verdi but moved it to Saturday 27th March 2004 in Guildford Cathedral. Make a note of it now! The Bach will have to be postponed to another time, I'm afraid. In November, though, we will be combining with Michael's outstanding musical forces from Dulwich College (this being his last year with them in a full-time appointment capacity) to perform a work that is rapidly gaining popularity across the nation and is constantly at the top of the classical music charts. See the bottom of the previous page for details.



GLISSANDO : a technique adopted by singers when faced with difficult runs or a looming high note

CRESCENDO : a reminder to the singer that he/she has been singing too loudly

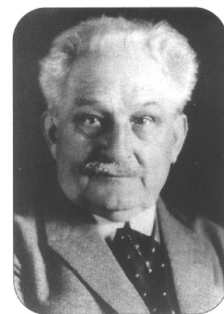
BAR LINE : a gathering of people, usually amongst which may be found a musician or two

CADENCE : when everybody hopes you're going to stop, but you don't

Christmas sees us return to St. Paul's, Southfields as noted earlier. It is clear from feedback received over a couple of years that we seem to have got the format of the concert about right now where we include a sizeable choral work of around 15-25 minutes in the programme as well as the more popular carols for audience participation. This enables the choir to show off its talents as well as enabling the audience to feel part of the whole event. This year we're notching it up a gear and including Part 1 of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*.

In March we give Mr. Verdi's *Requiem* its long overdue airing and you will have to pull all the stops out to sell tickets for that. It really **IS** all up to you (again, see page 4). Ours will be the third Saturday in a row for choral concerts in Guildford Cathedral so we'll have our work cut out. Still, we've always been a choir to step up to a challenge!

For the summer concert we return to St. John's, Waterloo. At the time of writing, the music content has not yet been finalised but will likely include works by Bruckner and probably Janacek's version of *The Lord's Prayer*, the year 2004 being the 150th anniversary of Leos Janacek's birth. Popular concerts at St. John's in the past have included music that use brass ensembles and Bruckner's music lends itself well to this option.



Leos Janacek

A contemporary Mass for Peace, a slice of a Bach masterpiece, a Janacek jewel and a mighty Requiem all in one season. Aren't you pleased to be a member of **this** choral society?



Finance

I am indebted to John Bright for having taken over the reigns as Hon. Treasurer so well and with such ease. It has enabled us to retain the tight control on the finances that we also had with his predecessor. As a charity which relies entirely on its members for sourcing and generating its income we have to evaluate the financial risk of all decisions taken.

As is often the case, circumstances can change during a season and some unplanned expenses need to be covered. For a treasurer, writing cheques is usually accompanied by an unsmiling face! On the other hand, cheques written in WCS's favour and a stack of notes brings a smile that would rival a Cheshire cat! This year, in particular, we have been very fortunate to receive some extra income that will help greatly in supporting events in the future and maybe you might like to reflect on some of these to see if you could influence similar donations.

Earlier this year, one member and her husband decided to donate a large lump sum (several thousand pounds) to the choir for personal reasons, including a thank you for the years of enjoyment that she had had by being a member. It was a tremendously generous gift and, in consultation with them, we shall use it for specific projects for the choir's benefit. The sum, in this particular case, was large but any sum no matter how large or small is always welcome.

Another item has been that a few of us have, in recent months, sung at a few weddings both locally and outside of London. In those cases where we have been offered a payment, much of that has been donated to the choir. The last one, in mid-August, came about from a chance e-mail to me from someone who had found the choir's website and who were searching for a local choir to sing.

Also, on my return from the Harrogate Choral Week last week, I found an envelope from a firm of solicitors on my door mat. Imagine my surprise when I opened it to find a cheque for WCS for £3000 as a legacy payment from the Will of a former member of the choir. Again, the Committee will consider carefully how this donation should be best used.

In many cases, income, especially subscription income, can be increased by taking advantage of the Gift Aid scheme. It can result in a substantial percentage of our funds. It is pleasing that a very high proportion of the choir have signed up for this. It costs you absolutely nothing to do so. Please see Liz Holder or Sarah Hendry if you want to find out more.

Even with the current financial status being fairly stable, the Committee still felt it prudent to raise the subscription rate slightly for this coming year (it was left unchanged last year). Therefore the full list of subscription rates for the season 2003/2004 is as follows:

Type	Rate
Standard	£93.00
Aged 25 or Under	£55.00
Registered Unemployed	£55.00
Full-time students	£12.00



ACCIDENTALS : wrong notes
 CROTCHET : like knitting, only faster
 COUNTERTENOR : a singing waiter
 PERFECT PITCH : throwing an old piano into a skip without it hitting the sides

CLEF : something to jump from before a solo
 BASS CLEF : where you end up if you jumped
 AGNUS DEI : a famous female church composer
 CONCERT : a place where people go to cough and sneeze
 PRELUDE : warm-up before the clever stuff
 ANTIPHONAL: leaving your answer-machine on all the time
 INTERVAL : how long it takes to find the right note
 VIBRATO : used by singers to hide the fact they can't find the right note
 ESPRESSIVO : with closed eyes and a large dose of vibrato
 PREPARATORY BEAT : a threat made to singers, i.e., sing, or else....



Introduce two new people to the Friends scheme and be exempt from the minimum ticket purchase obligation for the next concert

Members of the Friends scheme will benefit from reserved seating at the Christmas concert, the Verdi Requiem in March and the summer concert at St. John's, Waterloo



Gone Chopin
 Got my Lizst
 Bach later
 Probably Baroque

Tilly's Ticket Tips

- ▶ Always keep some handbills with you to give to people you bump into
- ▶ Put a poster/handbill in the window of your car
- ▶ Which public places do you know of that would benefit from a poster or brochure - notice boards, church, tree, lamppost, shop window, doctor/dentist surgery, restaurant, library, and above all those places near the concert venue
- ▶ Send/hand out the handbills to as many people (neighbours, colleagues, school gates friends, club associates as well as friends and family) as early as possible
- ▶ Make an evening of it - dine out afterwards, invite them back for a snack/drinks/supper - perhaps team up with a choir colleague
- ▶ Ask your friends if they would like to bring someone else
- ▶ Follow up your invitations and don't be shy - they will only say no if they don't want to come!
- ▶ Don't pre-judge the type of people you think would be interested - invite them all!
- ▶ Above all, blow your own trumpet! According to many music critics, our concerts are extremely good and we should share these triumphs with as many people as possible. When selling tickets, you may feel sometimes that a concert is under-rehearsed at that time - but you also know that Michael is a professional and judges the moment to the concert day when we reach our peak of excellence, so you won't make a fool of yourself!
- ▶ Take advantage of our student rates to bring choral music to young people. Few will fail to be moved by parts of the Verdi *Requiem*
- ▶ Maybe your club or society would be attracted by the 6 tickets for the price of 5 offer



Do we have your correct email address?

It is very much easier to make announcements, etc, by e-mail wherever possible. If you did not receive an e-mail from Tilly by the end of August then we probably do not have your current e-mail address. If this is the case then please send a message to Tilly, noting your name and voice part, at tillyr@freeuk.com. If you have received an e-mail from her then no need to do anything.



And Finally

CONDUCTOR: a musician who is adept at following many people at the same time