

2019 February

BEXHILL CHORAL SOCIETY

We have had 2 concerts since the last EADCA meeting. October included Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Franck's setting of *Psalms 150*, Schubert's *Tantum Ergo* and Puccini's short *Requiem*. We had some concerns because these are less well-known, and we were also down in numbers (particularly basses), but in the event there was a good audience and the concert went well. We also had a fund-raising Quiz evening on 2nd November – this was very popular and in fact we had to turn people away!

Our Christmas concert also went well and was very well-attended – we seem to have acquired an audience of 'regulars' for our Christmas concert, although unfortunately they seem less attracted to our other concerts. We were asked to sing for the Rother Chairman's Christmas Civic Reception but unfortunately weren't able to do this, for various logistical reasons.

Our next concert is in May, Rutter's *Requiem* and *The Sprig of Thyme*, and a piece by our own conductor Kenneth Roberts, *According to Thy Word* – a setting of the Nunc Dimittis in English, which was very well received when we performed it in 2010 and returns by popular request! We have another concert in October and plan a workshop morning in November.

2019 February

CONCENTUS

Our new term started in September at JPK Centre with 6 new members joining.

The main focus in rehearsals was our Christmas programme but we also included varying additional music due to the number of external activities that the choir had been asked to participate within.

Concentus was invited to sing and members were very keen to participate at the following events:
St Wilfred's Charity event at the Hippodrome 5 October.

The soft opening of the Beacon Centre on Friday 30 October and Saturday 1 December, singing in the newly constructed area and attracting large crowds who were invited to join us in community carol singing.

Seaford Christmas Magic on Saturday 1 December but unfortunately all performances within where the covered stage should have been erected, were cancelled due to dangerous weather conditions.

Eastbourne Christmas Market for the opening on Saturday 1 December and again for the closing on Saturday 22 December, both to entertain and lead community carol singing. Although the weather was pretty atrocious on both days, Concentus nevertheless sang on in true spirit and still managed to encourage the passing audience to stay and join in with us. Although our bodies were somewhat 'damp', our hearts were glowing due to the fantastic atmosphere that reigned throughout. We also gained some new members this term due to the efforts of all concerned who sang in the audience!

Performed our two major Christmas concerts; the first in Seaford on Saturday 8 December and again in Eastbourne Saturday 15 December. We were rewarded with a record number of ticket sales at both concerts resulting in the need to bring in more chairs in order to seat our bulging audiences!

Our spring term commenced beginning of January with 17 new members joining. Our main focus is again our June concerts which for the first time we will be jointly performing with Lewes, Glynde and Beddingham Brass under the direction of bandmaster Ian Stewart. Needless to say the choir (and indeed the band) are all very excited at this prospect of working together which will doubtless be extremely enjoyable and enhance the performances for all concerned.

Once again we have been invited to sing at a number of external events, but two particular engagements stand out, namely singing with (in backing) Aled Jones in Worthing on Saturday 13 April and also in providing the same function for Lesley Garrett in the Hippodrome Eastbourne on Thursday 18 July. So, a lot to look forward too indeed!

On a more concerning note, I feel it is worth sharing words of warning to you all involving a situation that befell us in December where with less than a week to go, I was forced to consider cancelling our Seaford concert.

The situation arose in that due to a prior commitment (of which plenty notice was given), our regular accompanist was unable to play for this event. Accordingly we became aware of a local accompanist, being an Oxford organ scholar who by local report, is considered capable in performing this role. Although unused by us (albeit already known by me) we decided to put our trust in him. He also agreed to play for our Eastbourne Market engagement on 23 Dec. Accordingly we gave him our concert music in early October.

10 days before our Seaford concert and having pre sold 80% of our tickets, he announced that he was far too busy with University assignments so could no longer play for us?! He added he would try and find somebody else as a replacement but wasn't sure if he could achieve this? Needless to say I made endless calls (some to a few of you reading this!) in trying to find an alternative accompanist (piano and organ) which at Christmas time is not an easy task!

In exhausting my entire list (with additional names given to me by other local MD's) I had to admit defeat and was on the verge of cancelling the concert. With this comes the embarrassment of advertising this action, refunding ticket monies and everything else encompassed within that we are all too familiar with!

Having voiced my complete dissatisfaction with the individual, in the end he did say he would play if we had no alternative option. However at this point I was not prepared to take the chance to find he might not actually turn up on the day, so was resigned to cancel the concert.

I remain eternally grateful to our regular accompanist (Anthony Wilson) who upon hearing our plight, made a number of 11 hour arrangements to suitably cover his own engagement, so enabling him to play for us and allow our concert to take place; the success of which you have previously read above.

When I informed the original accompanist I had covered his role, he was bordering on apologetic for the distress his actions had caused, confirming he was still willing to play for our Eastbourne Market engagement. I confirmed the music would be a few shorter numbers drawn from our Christmas music plus a few CFC 'green book' carols. Bear in mind he received this music since early October.

Understandably I was very cautious but decided to accept his offer in good faith. However unbeknown to him, I did so in no more than to 'test' his commitment and reliability. Accordingly I secured a fall-back arrangement in the event of need to cover his absence.

Needless to say 9 days before the event my suspicions were realised when he emailed to say he was 'unprepared' in not having sufficient time to practice due to too many other commitment at his Uni. He added some of the music 'was unplayable as there were more notes than he had fingers'?! One of these carols was 'Ding Dong merrily on High' from the green book?! He further added his 'professional status' was 'at risk' as he could not be expected to play the 'organ' to concert standard in the street??? Notable he was only required to play a keyboard and was fully aware from the start this was an outside street event!

His name is James Tomlinson and I would strongly recommend never becoming involved with him. If having links to the local 'am-dram' circuit the name will probably already be familiar to you.

Luckily we survived this experience, learned a lot and came out the other side much stronger for it.

I have seriously considered whether to share this experience with you all and in particular as to the rights or wrongs of naming and shaming? However I concluded I would not want any other group to go through what we did if it was within my opportunity to prevent it.

Onward and upward as they say!

2019 February DOWNLAND SINGERS

The Christmas season was a busy one for the choir starting with us singing for Chestnut Tree House's party and ending at Queen Alexandra Cottage Homes.

We enjoyed ourselves in the Beacon Centre albeit a chilly and draughty experience! This is the first time that we have sung here in the festive period. The interaction with passers-by was a novel experience for us, many of them being friends! Many of the children were clearly budding conductors or vocalists.

The annual Gala at Trinity Church with Wealden Brass was extremely well received by the audience.

We have only just started rehearsals and will be working on new repertoire for Easter.

2019 February EASTBOURNE CHORAL SOCIETY

ECS continues to thrive with a membership of on average 90 people. Our autumn concert in November comprised two rather different, yet in many ways, complementary pieces. – The Duruffe Requiem and Jenkins - The Armed Man. Both pieces were dedicated to the fallen in WW1, befitting the anniversary of the ending of that war. The Duruffe was new to many of the choir and it was challenging to sing, but very rewarding in the end. The Armed Man was a very different sing and many of the choir had taken part in performances of the piece previously. The result, according to both audience and choir, was a very moving performance and all in all a lovely evening.

December brought its usual round of carol events, including our charity concert for Children with Cancer in All Saints' Church and our annual booking to lead the lunch time carol service at All Souls' church. We couldn't even escape on our choir Christmas meal evening and were requested to sing several carols – which we did from memory! The other customers in the restaurant seemed delighted!! The demand for choirs to sing at Christmas time seems to be on the increase and I had to refuse many requests as I didn't feel I could ask choir members to do more!!

We are now busy preparing for our Brahms Requiem concert which is on 30th March.

2019 February EASTBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CHORUS

No reports 2019

2019 February EMMANUEL

Plans for the grouping of our former Methodist and URC choirs in a new building are steadily moving ahead and our musical resources are already beginning to coordinate. However no suggestion yet of any public presentation.

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HAILSHAM CHORAL

Our Autumn concert in November, when we sang a selection of European Sacred Music, Hubert Parry's Songs of Farewell, as well as a first performance of the Whispering Mass composed by our very talented choir member Marcus Haddow, was a hugely exciting, challenging and ultimately very enjoyable evening. Marcus' Mass complemented the rest of the programme very well as the music progressed through the ages culminating in this modern setting of the traditional mass, with elements of jazz and rock with flavours of Mozart and Gregorian chant. The concert was well-received, despite, or perhaps because of, the ambitious programme.

In contrast, our Christmas concert in Hailsham Parish Church was a more relaxed event, and although the weather was awful, it was reasonably well attended. We also sang carols at the Beacon Centre (formerly the Arndale Centre) in aid of our nominated charity for the year, View Craft (a charity for blind and partially sighted people to learn crafts). This was the first time we had sung there and our more traditional carols were well received by the public!

We are currently rehearsing Haydn's Creation for our Spring concert on 23 March.

2019 February

HEATHFIELD CHORAL SOCIETY

On 10th November we performed a concert marking the centenary of the Armistice, with Rutter's *Eternal Light* and a new work by Laura Rossi *Voices of Remembrance*. This was quite challenging and large-scale but drew a packed audience and a great deal of positive feedback.

It was quite an emotional roller coaster, so to balance the term, we went into Christmas with a more light-hearted carol concert at our local church in Old Heathfield, which was a bit of a squeeze, but nobody seemed to mind that. We are now preparing for a concert of well-known choruses and songs in East Hoathley, and for Brahms' Requiem in May, which will be my final concert with the choir.

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LAUGHTON VILLAGES CHOIR

Since we last met the LVC (and friends, including Linda's Forest Row based ensemble, The Clockhouse Singers) put on a highly successful concert in the All Saints Centre, Lewes, promoted by the Lions of Lewes on a Sunday afternoon in late October. The place was packed. The LVC performed a wide variety of short pieces, ranging from high classical (Mozart Ave Verum, Elgar Sea Pictures 1 and 4, Cherubini Crucifixus – the one all on one note!) to lower-brow light music including Super Trouper, Why do Fools fall in Love and Java Jive. It went down a storm. Following Lewes, we then turned to carols, and, on the back of a far smaller event last year, where I shifted the final choir practice of the year from our village hall into the church, which I candle lit, to sing carols to ourselves for ourselves, this year I invited anyone to come and join the LVC in singing carols in the church. I expected about 20 guests and got over a 100! Clearly there is a great appetite for carol singing outside of a religious service as well as listening. The choir sang some posh carols to the guests as well as leading on the traditional congregational carols. The church was packed and rang lustily with the sound of carols sung in full harmony. We held a retiring collection and made nearly £400.

The next 5 months will be taken up with learning 5/7 choruses of the Brahms Requiem. We will do the 4 hands / 1 piano version with Jozik Kotz singing the baritone solo. This is a massive step up for the LVC which is only a cut above a community choir, with many members claiming not to be able to read music. I have issued a detailed rehearsal schedule defining exactly which pages will be covered each week between here and June 8th and have made it clear choristers will be expected to do lots of homework!

The LVC is critically low in male singers. We especially need basses. Might you advertise our need to your members to see if there is anyone out there who might fancy helping us out with the Brahms (in English) until early June? We rehearse on Monday evenings in Laughton 8.00-9.30.

2019 February

PHOENIX CHOIR

Phoenix have done two concerts so far this year, both of which proved to be fantastic events and surpassed our expectations. The Remembrance Concert on 11th November was an addition to our programme to mark the centenary and we were joined by extra singers from around the area, which also proved to be an aid to recruiting. Budgeting was rather an unknown quantity but we had a more appropriate retiring collection instead of tickets and made a significant profit which enabled us to balance the books and make a hefty donation to Help for Heroes.

We did the usual round of Christmas carolling gigs Our recent concert was again a great success and hugely enjoyed by singers and audience alike (who could not enjoy Mozart Requiem?) although we will sadly still make a loss.

We start rehearsals for our summer concert this week – Rutter's *Feel the Spirit* and Michael Field's own *Midsummer Mass*. We will be joined by the Fletching Singers for this concert. To that end any top tips for planning a joint concert, especially where the budget and expenses and legalities are concerned would be welcome.

2019 February

SEAFORD CHORAL SOCIETY

As I am not sure what, if anything, has been reported to the EADCA Committee since I gave up the Chairmanship of Seaford Choral Society in July 2017, I will draw to your attention that since January 2018 our Music Director has been Colin Hughes and our rehearsal accompanist (and, additionally, our concert pianist/organist/cellist is now John Eady, appointed following the death of our beloved Nick Milner-Gulland. Our Chair is now Steve Machan but he has recently asked me to continue as the Choral Society's representative on EADCA. Under their leadership, the Society thrives and now numbers some 80-90 members.

Our Autumn concert, held on 24th November 2018, was entitled *Only Remembered*, a multi-media memorial of the end of WW1. It was held in our new rehearsal venue, Seaford Baptist Church and was deemed a great success by both choir and audience. In addition to excerpts from *The Armed Man*, together with *How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place* and *For the Fallen* (poem by Laurence Binyon), we remembered the centenary of female suffrage with the *Pankhurst Anthem* and were joined in the second half of the concert by the Seaford Primary School Concert Choir to sing a selection of Christmas music.

Our Spring concert will be held on 13th April in St Leonard's Parish church when we shall be singing Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*. I understand that there will be a Summer concert of lighter music and when we re-assemble in the Autumn term, we shall be rehearsing Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* for the Autumn concert on 30th November 2020. It is proposed to sing Mendelssohn's *Elijah* in our Spring 2021 Concert. I'm told that the Society's target for the coming year is to attract younger people, whilst keeping our core members happy.

2019 February

SOUTH DOWNS SINGERS

The choir has come on in size, and now has close to 60 members. We still remain a very happy bunch despite the increase in numbers. We are also very pleased to welcome back Nigel Lawson to our bass section. Nigel has been performing with the Eastbourne G and S Group, but has returned to us, also we have several more bass singers, which is most encouraging.

We performed our Christmas Concert this year in aid of Taylor Made Dreams, a charity that enables children with life threatening illness to achieve their dreams, before their short lives are over, and help to leave lasting memories for the children's families. The concert was very well supported, and we were in a position to donate £700 to the charity.

The Concert was an excellent performance, but was somewhat marred by the fact it was our wonderful Musical Director, Louise Morris' last with us. The audience gave her amazing applause, and there were several tears from the choir...Louise has been with us for 6 years, and will be very much missed. Her parting shot was to sing in the concert, for the choir, and what an amazing voice she has. Louise is moving away from East Sussex to further her career in another school.

Before leaving, Louise suggested someone to take over the choir, for which we are very grateful. Our new musical director is Jane Pendry. We are very lucky to have such another talented MD who I am sure will continue to bring on the choir from strength to strength as did Louise.

Our next concert is May 25th 7.30 at St John's, Polegate.