

CHOIR REPORTS FOR EADCA MEETING: 19.10.24

Bexhill Choral Society	<p>Bexhill Choral Society's May concert of Vivaldi <i>Gloria</i> and Pergolesi <i>Stabat Mater</i> with orchestra was highly successful - we sold 198 tickets and got some enthusiastic feedback from audience members. We had a generous grant from the Williams Church Music Trust which helped considerably with finances.</p> <p>Our next event, in June, was a fundraising recital by our director of music Kenneth Roberts, 'The Piano at the Movies', in which he talked about and played some of the music from films from the 40s and 50s, from Mozart to Scott Joplin. This proved popular, and Ken's generosity in donating profits from this event helps us to afford orchestral accompaniment for concerts – we feel very grateful!</p> <p>Our most recent concert on 5th October, again with orchestra, featured Vaughan Williams' <i>Toward the Unknown Region</i> - the choir found this quite challenging but it went very well on the night - along with various other short works including Parry's <i>I was Glad</i>, Stanford's <i>Songs of the Sea</i>, Holst's <i>Short Festival Te Deum</i>, and a few unaccompanied items which went much better than we'd expected from rehearsals (the sopranos didn't go flat!) and apparently went down very well with the audience. We obtained a grant of £500 from the Vaughan Williams Foundation for this concert and discovered that they will consider performances of works by all British/Irish composers of the last 100 years for grants, not just Vaughan Williams.</p> <p>Our next event is a Singing Morning open workshop on 2nd November from 10-1. We held similar events in 2016 and 2019 and found they attracted a wider audience for concerts and several new members, so we hope for the same this time. We will be doing Mozart's <i>Lacrimosa</i> and a reprise of the Parry <i>I was Glad</i> (we wanted something in English!) Our Town Council has given us a grant towards this as it's a community event.</p> <p>After that it's our Christmas concert on 7th December, and singing at a couple of local care homes. Next May is Mozart's <i>Requiem</i> and Salieri's <i>Mass in D</i>, an interesting combination which we hope will lend itself well to publicity stories!</p> <p>We currently have around 60 members, which seems to boil down to about 42 actually singing in concerts. We've lost a few over the past year, but gained a similar number of new members, and have been particularly glad to welcome a couple of new basses and tenors. We do notice that attendance seems worse than it was pre-pandemic, which appears to be a mix of holidays/visits to family abroad, grandparenting duties, and health issues. We still request firmly that people don't come with coughs, colds etc. so that does mean people now miss more</p>
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	<p>rehearsals instead of struggling heroically in and giving it to everyone else!</p> <p>We had hoped to recruit one or two new committee members and spread the load a bit more evenly but in the event we lost one and didn't gain any!</p> <p>Jenny Meteyard, Secretary</p>
Concentus	<p>In June we performed our Concerts in Seaford and Eastbourne and were pleased to welcome large audiences and to receive a standing ovation on both occasions. Our programme was varied with medleys from Abba and South Pacific together with music such as Nella Fantasia, Easter Hymn, Reflection and Hallelujah.</p> <p>We were pleased to support the charity Children with Cancer by singing on their carnival float in May and members enjoyed a Line Dancing afternoon in July.</p> <p>We continue to support our chosen charity for this year - the Downs Syndrome Development Trust, an organisation very close to one of our members</p> <p>Once again, we welcomed some new members at the start of term in September as well as the return of several members who have had some 'time off'. We are now rehearsing for our two Christmas concerts – 14th December at Seaford Baptist Church and 21st December at St Saviour's Church Eastbourne, both at 4pm.</p>
Downland Singers	<p>We enjoyed a busy summer season which included several new ventures for the choir.</p> <p>We began by joining with a group of patients from the Sovereign Harbour Medical Practice who were making a promotional video with the aim of encouraging doctors to come along and work at the health centre. They had written new words for the song "Oh dear what can the matter be" suggesting many reasons why Eastbourne was such a good place to come and work. Just two rehearsals were followed by a recording and filming session at Trinity Church. The video includes interviews and photos of staff members together with drone footage from around the area and has just been released.</p> <p>In June we entertained at Willingdon Park Manor, which had just opened to residents, they came along and joined in the singing of some popular favourite songs with us.</p> <p>This was followed by a concert at All Saints Church, Waldron where we entertained as part of their Summer Open Gardens and Flower Festival. We received a warm welcome and the programme was very much appreciated.</p>

	<p>Our season ended with a Summer Concert at Trinity Church where we enjoyed a good sing even though the audience numbers were rather disappointing.</p> <p>During August we used the facilities at “Gather” in The Beacon Centre for a day in which to promote the choir. This was a very different way of advertising the choir which proved an interesting experience! We met many people, some openly admitted to not singing while many stopped to chat, watch a video showing who we are and what we sing and engaged members in conversation. A number of contacts were made, a few of which followed up their initial interest by coming along to our first session in September. Time will tell whether or not they return or, even better, join us!</p> <p>August ended with a social evening hosted by one of our Altos. These are always a real hit with members and a time to chat and relax together.</p> <p>The Autumn session started at the end of September so we have gone straight into learning repertoire for Christmas. We were delighted to welcome two new Altos but are still very much on the look-out for the elusive men to balance the harmony!</p> <p>Jennie Macfadyen</p>
<p>Eastbourne Choral Society</p>	<p>I see my last report was written just before our March Messiah concert. This proved to be a great evening, hugely enjoyed by the choir and, as always with this piece, very popular with the audience, shown by the number of people who attended and the wonderful reception.</p> <p>The summer term was rather different from usual. Instead of finishing with a concert, we held an open singing afternoon in the pretty setting of St Nicholas Church, in Pevensey, followed by an informal concert. The music was very different from the previous term too – a wide variety of pieces. – Rutter Magnificat, Chilcott Little Organ Mass, Haydn Little Organ Mass and the Spirituals from Tippett A child of Our Time. A challenge for the choir, but very enjoyable. For the informal concert we were joined by Katie Brown, a lovely young soprano soloist from Chichester University Conservatoire, and we were accompanied throughout by Nick Houghton. This approach to the term was rather an experiment and we certainly saved money by not having a concert in July, but whilst attendance was reasonably good for rehearsals, not all members supported the end of term event as much as they usually did for a “proper” concert”. We were joined by some twenty “visitors” though for the day and everyone there seemed to enjoy the event – making music on a lovely summer’s day in a pretty setting.</p> <p>The start of this new term has been very busy with several new members to welcome, and some people to welcome back, the choir</p>

	<p>AGM and all the usual concert planning. Sadly, we have “lost” a few members too, generally on health grounds. We are enjoying rehearsing this term’s music for our Advent Concert in November – Bach- Sleeper’s Wake, Lauridsen - Sure on this Shining Night and O Magnum Mysterium, Chilcott - On Christmas Night and Cecilia McDowell - Christus Natus Est.</p> <p>Happy singing everyone!</p> <p>Liz Barker</p>
<p>Eastbourne Symphony Chorus</p>	<p>See Hailsham Choral’s report.</p>
<p>Hailsham Choral</p>	<p>Our big project of the year was Verdi’s Requiem on 11 May, jointly organised by Eastbourne Symphony Orchestra and Hailsham Choral. It had been Jozik’s idea to commit Hailsham Choral to singing this work, joined by singers from the various local choirs and none, calling themselves the Eastbourne Symphony Chorus. We invited everyone to join our rehearsals, which some did, and we therefore had a good core of singers well prepared for the concert. We had good cooperation with John from ESO and the concert was a huge success, with some 350 people in the audience! Graham Jones conducted. Costs were of course high, but amazingly the concert made a small profit which was shared between ESO and HCS.</p> <p>We sang some beautiful music at our Summer concert a few weeks later, but had a very small audience - we think members did not want to push tickets after the huge effort for the Verdi. There was also an England football match on! We did have a few fabulous social events in May and June - visits to the windmill at Stone Cross and cream tea in a member’s garden afterwards, and a ghost walk around Pevensy, organised and guided by another member!</p> <p>At the end of September the choir from Hailsham’s twin town visited us and we had a really nice weekend together, culminating in a joint concert at Hailsham Parish Church. It was great fun to sing together and of course we renewed friendships as well. We hope to return there again in two years’ time.</p> <p>We are now looking forward to singing Bach’s Christmas Oratorio with a baroque orchestra on 7 December. As this year has been different to our normal pattern of concerts, we thought we’d take the opportunity to sing a big Christmas work, rather than our usual carol concert. We will be singing carols at two local nursing homes in aid of our chosen charity, to be decided at our AGM.</p> <p>Milly Clark</p>
<p>Heathfield Choral Society</p>	<p>We had an interesting and successful spring/summer term when we gave two concerts. In March we sang Stainer’s Crucifixion and Faure</p>

	<p>Requiem and were delighted to have a young treble sing the Piu Jesu. Then in June, we had an evening of Purcell starting with two of his earlier songs and then Dido and Aeneas in the second half. Our soloists did a splendid job of creating an operatic environment and we were accompanied by a superb baroque orchestra led by Julia Bishop. Special thanks also to our MD, Seb Charlesworth, who occasionally turned round on his rostrum to sing the part of Aeneas!</p> <p>This autumn our concert will be on Saturday 30th November with a medley titled “In Praise of Music” to celebrate St Cecilia, the patron saint of music. Pieces include work by Handel, Finzi and Parry. It is proving quite a challenge to learn all these in a relatively short time but we are all working very hard to produce a quality performance.</p> <p>We continue to hold our rehearsals on a Monday evening in Horam Village Hall, which is a lovely venue with good acoustics and plenty of parking! As regulars, we also get it at a very reasonable price.</p> <p>Our challenges are much the same as ever: getting new members and selling concert tickets.</p> <p>Pre-covid we were over 75 in number and now are about 50 with c45 normally singing in concerts. We get new recruits each term but also lose some, so the number has been roughly the same for a few years. However, we do have a good balance of voices with 8-10 basses and 6 tenors.</p> <p>Lower membership also impacts on ticket sales – 25 fewer singers to bring their friends and family! Heathfield is essentially a small market town and we do not have the luxury of the catchment area and classical music fans enjoyed by choirs based in Eastbourne and surrounds. We are lucky to have a good sized venue but it certainly lacks the atmosphere of an impressive church!</p> <p>Looking forward, we are doing Elijah in the Spring term, which will be refreshingly different. Next December, we plan to sing Vaughan Williams Hodie. This is a work for larger choirs and we hope that singers from other choirs will join us: the mechanism for this has not yet been discussed.</p> <p>Ruth McDermott</p>
Noteworthy	<p>Our Spring concert on March 10th with the children from St Andrew’s Prep was a great success. Everyone agreed that it was great fun and a very positive and worthwhile event. The children joined us in Captain Noah’s Floating Zoo and a very moving Will Todd piece, Like a Rainbow, and NWV also sang Shearing’s Songs and Sonnets. Even those choir members who weren’t that keen on the music choices at first were won over, everyone loved having the children singing with us and the concert</p>

	<p>was deemed to be a huge success. We will be looking to link up with the school again for a future concert.</p> <p>Our next concert on 15th June was at Holy Trinity Church, Eastbourne as part of their Festival of Flowers weekend. The music was a mix of pieces the organiser wanted and hymns that were represented in the flower arrangements. It took quite a while to finalise the program as there were a couple of restrictions and some of the choices were not suitable for our small, usually a cappella choir, but after a lot of toing and froing we were able to prepare a lovely range of music suitable for us and the occasion. eg 'I was glad' by Purcell instead of Parry and several new arrangements of hymn tunes written by Rachel. Of course the choir sang beautifully and everyone enjoyed the concert hugely. One negative was that we had to compromise and offer a lower ticket price and so, although we had a good sized audience, the finances don't reflect this.</p> <p>Following this, we had a lovely social get together in Rachel's garden with cake and bubbly and plenty of chat and laughter. A really lovely occasion with most of the choir able to attend. At the end of the summer, we heard the sad news of the death of one of our former members, Val Winslade. Val was a very keen singer and musician and sang with several choirs locally and will be sorely missed by all of us that knew her. A few weeks ago, some of us were privileged to attend her funeral and sing as part of a scratch choir. In true Val style and at her request, her funeral finished with the rousing music of Abba's Thank you for the Music.</p> <p>This term we are working towards our 10th anniversary concert on November 16th in St Mary's, Old Town. This will be an exciting concert featuring Lauridsen's Nocturnes, Parry's Songs of Farewell and other choir favourites. To celebrate, we have invited all former members of NWV to come and join us in singing the Parry and a couple of other pieces. We will be having a celebratory cake and 'bring and share' meal afterwards too.</p> <p>Rachel Shouksmith</p>
Phoenix	<p>We performed our summer concert in early June. Despite our lower numbers and depleted male voices it went very well. We received some lovely comments from our dignitaries among others and really enjoyed the programme – The Little Jazz Mass and other similar pieces.</p> <p>We finally moved to a new rehearsal venue in September and are now at Emmanuel in the Sanctuary. It is bright, warm and comfortable with little or no setting up to do which we are really enjoying. Paul Tabraham (Rev.) is a joy to deal with so all is good. That said we are, for various reasons, going back to All Saints' for our extended Saturday rehearsals, as well as our concerts. Their new Admin. Assistant is very organised so things are a little easier there.</p>

	<p>Michael has put together a lovely programme for our next concert in February; Gjeilo and Lauridsen with a few other bits added, one of which is composed by one of our very talented young members and fits the 'vibe' perfectly. The whole programme is entitled 'Winter Meditation' and that is also the aim! We are again low in number, the lowest ever for the winter and our Dutch friends cannot join us this time. Several members have defected as they didn't like this programme – how ever beautiful it's not Mozart! Loyalty counts for little these days especially in a town where one can cherry pick. That said we have a decent core of committed Phoenix folk who are pulling together, rising to the challenge and producing a great sound.</p> <p>We actually have a tenor section for a change, a couple of whom are absolute power houses which is just fantastic. Sadly one of these will be moving away so we are making the most of him and crossing our fingers that it won't be before the concert.</p> <p>As always if any of your stronger singers would like to join us later to sing this lovely programme and to boost our numbers, they would be very welcome. They would however need to put some practice in before attending all rehearsals in the new year as this programme is challenging even for seasoned singers.</p> <p>We're doing our usual Christmas events with an added event for St. Wilfrid's at All Saints' Chapel. We're currently deciding on our summer programme with all of the usual considerations ~ membership numbers, music preferences, cost and audience numbers. Nothing can be taken as read any longer but we adapt!</p> <p>Fiona Evans</p>
Seaford Choral Society	<p>It has been a frenetic year for the society following the resignation of our MD, Colin at the end of Summer 2023. We are extremely fortunate to have Veronica Fewkes amongst our number. Veronica had been the director of music at Roedean School and her attempts to keep this a secret didn't succeed for long. She kindly agreed to direct us for the Autumn term and to help us to recruit another MD. In the meantime she was a great hit with the choir. An inspirational MD. Rehearsals were fun and the Christmas concert a great success. Messiah pt.1 and a lovely selection of Christmas music including the première of a carol written by a Seaford composer.</p> <p>We had a few applicants and got together to make a short list. We researched and interviewed and interviewed again and finally made our choice. We had a new MD who would be starting after Christmas. It was an exciting time but it wasn't too long before we wondered if we had chosen the right match for our choir. Things went quite well for a term. Mozart's Requiem was a church filler and a great success. A new</p>

	<p>innovation was a chamber choir. Anyone who wanted to could volunteer to join and Veronica rehearsed them for 30 minutes before some of the normal rehearsals. They sang five a cappella motets and feedback was excellent. Before other rehearsals Veronica led a group who felt that they would benefit from a little extra support. Results are on YouTube. It hasn't actually gone viral yet.</p> <p>Summer term was the usual fun. "Songs of the Sea", including bits from Pirates of Penzance, Five English Folk songs by Vaughan Williams and various sea shanties. We were once again joined by Seaford Primary School. Sadly, the working relationship with the MD was breaking down and he left us just before the concert. Veronica (of course) stepped in and it was a great success. We were left, once again, seeking a new MD for the coming year. Veronica again stepped in for the term but after much soul searching decided that she would stay on for a while afterwards. There was (and still is) much rejoicing. It is hard to imagine a better MD. She has chosen to challenge us with some Rutter and Britten. The chamber choir continues. Solos will be in-house.</p> <p>A recent plant sale (starting at our chair, Alison's garden party) raised well over £100, which is useful at this time, when finances are being stretched and we are trying hard not to make big increases to subs. We are in the process of changing from our current Google admin platform to the Making Music platform.</p> <p><i>Steve Machan</i></p>
Sussex Harmony	<p>We have three concerts lined up for the rest of the year - for Harveys Brewery, an advent service in Lewes following the Book of Common Prayer and a carol service in Brighton. These are all repeat performances and if the past is anything to go by, they will be well supported. This summer we performed a concert as part of Rushlake Green's Little Arts Festival. Working in collaboration with the Sussex Family History Group who have been transcribing from dialect the diaries of a Georgian farmer from Bodle Street, we performed a concert of Sussex psalmody and music that would have been heard from pub to pulpit between 1700 - 1850. The SFHG sponsored the concert and with donations from the audience, we netted over £570 for the Festival. Trading on our success and on good reviews, we will be repeating this concert for the Ringmer History Group in June 2025, but ring some changes by including music from manuscripts found in Ringmer. There is also talk of other local history groups showing an interest.</p> <p>Paula Nicholson</p> <p>(This is Sussex Harmony's last report as they are leaving EADCA)</p>