

CHOIR REPORTS FOR EADCA MEETING: 30.9.23

Bexhill Choral Society	<p>Bexhill Choral Society's May concert of shorter choral classics – Baroque to the Beatles – was highly successful and very much enjoyed by both choir and audience. The smaller venue of St Peter's Church presented logistical challenges, having fixed pews, some rather large pillars, and a rather small space for choir and orchestra, but worked well acoustically and atmospherically.</p> <p>Our next event, in June, was a fundraising recital by our director of music Kenneth Roberts, 'The Piano in the Parlour', in which he talked about and played some of the music people played at home in the Victorian era before radio, TV and streaming. Again well received, and it raised a very welcome sum of money for the choir, helping us to afford orchestral accompaniment for concerts.</p> <p>We are now in the final throes of rehearsals for our Autumn concert on 7th October. The star piece for this is a new cantata, <i>Iseult</i>, written by Kenneth Roberts to celebrate his 70th birthday and to be premiered by the choir. The piece looks at the Tristan & Iseult story from Iseult's perspective. We have found this quite challenging and a lot of homework has been required and mostly done! Continuing the Celtic theme we're singing the little-known music for <i>King Arthur</i> by Arthur Sullivan, and also Holst's <i>Psalm 86</i>. Sadly we suspect that all this unfamiliar/new music may not attract a large audience in our rather conservative catchment area, but we hope for the best. Ken has arranged for the concert to be recorded/videoed, which is somewhat scary...!</p> <p>Our Christmas concert on 2nd December will probably feel like light relief. It's always very popular and is the only concert where we usually make a profit! 2024 will see concerts in May, October and December.</p> <p>A big project this year has been changing our rather primitive website to the Making Music Platform. This provides both a website (with a members' area), and database and email system, and the idea is that everything will be in one place, with much smoother and more integrated systems. Making Music provide excellent support, very helpful when the person mostly doing the setting up is a person without great technical ability (the secretary)! It's taken longer than planned, mostly because of the aforementioned lack of technical ability, but is now up and running. We now just have to try to train our members (including committee) to use it, rather than emailing the Secretary every time they need to know something or want a message sent to choir!</p> <p>We currently have around 60 members, so similar to pre-pandemic, but with a shortage of basses. We have again raised subs by a small amount and also plan to try to find some sponsors, and more advertisers for the programme.</p> <p>We elected a new Chair this year, the previous Chair having been in post for far longer than she intended and glad to finally 'retire', with huge gratitude to the new volunteer. As with many small voluntary organisations, it can be difficult finding people to fill administrative roles! We have also noticed that over the last couple of years attendance at rehearsal and for concerts has been more patchy, possibly because people are catching up on travel and family visits, and carrying out grandparent duties. We also continue to be strict</p>
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	<p>about people not attending with any symptoms of illness, particularly respiratory, and have avoided any outbreaks so far.</p> <p>Jenny Meteyard, Secretary</p>
Concentus	<p>Following our last meeting we were pleased to be able to support the Charity Children with Cancer in May by singing on their carnival float. In June we performed our two Summer concerts, which included a tribute to the coronation of King Charles, and were very well received.</p> <p>In August we held our annual barbecue at Bates Farm where we were entertained by several members of the choir who showed us their hidden talents.</p> <p>We started this term with ten new members at the first rehearsal, followed by several more in the following weeks. We are looking forward to our Christmas concerts to be held in Seaford on 9th December and in Eastbourne on 16th December.</p>
Downland Singers	<p>From last April we practised songs from a variety of sources in preparation for our Summer Concert. These were songs from Light Opera, such as Gilbert and Sullivan, and a suite from Phantom of the Opera (my favourite piece of this repertoire).</p> <p>We had our Summer Concert in early June which was very successful. After our Summer Break we revisited most of the above songs to perform a slightly shorter programme at our very popular venue, Bernhard Baron Cottage Homes, which takes place on Thursday 28th September.</p> <p>Number-wise we are up to 15 on the books, with plenty of room for more. I am pleased to report we have 2 Basses and 2 Tenors now, which makes life much easier, but again, plenty of room for more.</p> <p>We held a very successful Social Evening in July at a member's home. Because we do not have a scheduled rehearsal break, this is very much needed in our choir. It is now our intention to have one per term, hosted by various members. The next one is scheduled for 5th October. I wish to thank our Hostess, Fiona Bryer, for not only putting the idea forward in very enthusiastic terms, but also hosting the first two.</p> <p>I completed my term as Chairman at our last AGM in June, and our new Chairman is Denise Woodfin who until now served as our Secretary. Our new Secretary is Jeremy Rowett.</p> <p>Rosemary Rowett</p>
Eastbourne Choral Society	<p>2023 is a special year for ECS. As of this month we are 30 years old! We are celebrating the year by singing a wide variety of music, ranging from our lovely Mozart Requiem concert in the spring, through to Mozart and Lauridsen Nocturns, and Brahms Waltzes in the summer, and now rehearsing our more "usual" repertoire - Handel Alexander's Feast and Puccini Messa di Gloria, for our November concert. We also held a wonderful social at the end of the summer term where we invited back some past members, and our "front of house" people who so reliably welcome our audiences and pour countless glasses of wine at our concerts. Our special guest was Elizabeth Muir Lewis who founded the choir in 1993. An anniversary cake was funded by a choir member in memory of her Mum. The evening also celebrated the fact that</p>

	<p>John had been our MD for twenty years! Much delicious food was shared along with a fair amount of wine and lively conversation. A great evening!</p> <p>The start of the new term has proved to be busy! We have welcomed several new members and a few “returners” which is lovely. If all our new members stay, then our numbers will be approaching seventy again. We are delighted that some of our new members are young people. This, coupled with the fact that we regularly have students from Chichester University Conservatoire to perform as soloists or in a small group at our concerts, gives us hope that classical choral singing will survive into the future!</p> <p>Liz Barker</p>
<p>Eastbourne Symphony Chorus</p>	<p>Not sure how much detail you want from an ESO perspective re activity since the last meeting... neither of our last two concerts have been choral based but the details are here: ESO 7 May 2023 ESO 25 June 2023</p> <p>Since the last meeting, as well as having archived all 150 plus concerts, we have now archived all our Young Soloist Competitions.</p> <p>I've had a few enquiries re the Verdi Requiem and added them to my singers' emailing list so that they will be kept up to date with details. A few more have also added themselves to the MS form which is on the homepage of our website www.eso.org.uk (as mentioned in the minutes).</p> <p>John Thornley</p>
<p>Hailsham Choral</p>	<p>Since our last meeting when I reported on our Spring concert, we have had our Summer concert, which was held at the Hailsham Civic Community Hall. It was well attended and a lot of fun, singing Gilbert & Sullivan choruses as well as folksongs and some jazz items, which some found tricky in places, but went really well on the night! We rounded off our 60+2 anniversary celebrations with a choir garden party, which was a lovely and friendly event.</p> <p>We have started the new season with an Open Workshop, as part of the Hailsham Festival, which was a great success with many new people attending. Some of them have subsequently joined the choir, which is always great, especially as some were men! Jozik made the workshop a very enjoyable event, we not only learnt a lot, but had a lot of laughs as well! Some twelve Canadian students from the Bader College at Herstmonceux will be joining the choir during their year in the UK, a new venture for HCS. It's nice to have young voices in the choir!</p> <p>We are rehearsing Rossini's Petite Messe Solennelle, which is a wonderfully joyous work, with some long choruses to get our teeth into. We have sung it before some 8 years ago, so for a few of us it is at least familiar! The concert will be at St Saviour's Church on 11 November.</p> <p>We will go straight into Christmas mode after this event, with our usual</p>

	<p>carol concert at Hailsham Parish Church on 16 December, as well as singing carols at Hailsham Street Market and in Woodside Nursing home in the weeks before that.</p> <p>Milly Clark</p>
<p>Heathfield Choral Society</p>	<p>Since our last report in April, our Haydn's The Seasons concert went very well - the singers and audience all enjoyed it. We then had an informal "concert" in June: unfortunately our planned venue pulled out and so we just put up some staging in Horam Village Hall, where we rehearse, and gave a performance for friends and family which was followed by afternoon tea.</p> <p>On December 9th our concert is a re-telling of the Christmas Story as arranged in a modern piece: The Manchester Carols. The music was composed by Sasha Johnson Manning with words by Carol Ann Duffy (Poet Laureate 2009-2019). We will be joined by a school choir and a woodwind quartet and piano. We are very much enjoying rehearsing this.</p> <p>Next year, we will give two concerts in spring/early summer. Old favourites Stainer Crucifixion and Faure Requiem we will perform just before Easter and then Dido and Aeneas in early June.</p> <p>At our AGM at the beginning of September Chris Thompson, our Chairman for the last 9 years, stood down from the role although he continues to do a lot of work for the choir as well as being a leading light in our bass section. Our Treasurer of 6 years, Ruth McDermott, has taken on the role of Chairman and the new Treasurer is Howard Jones.</p> <p>Please note that our email addresses changed in the early summer and are: heathfieldchoral.chair@gmail.com and heathfieldchoral.treasurer@gmail.com.</p> <p>Ruth McDermott</p>
<p>Noteworthy</p>	<p>During the summer term, we continued working towards our June concert 'An English Serenade'. The concert was held at St Nic's in Pevensey and was part of their 'Summer Concert Festival'. Colin Hughes joined us to accompany the Chilcott's 'A Little Jazz Mass' which went down very well with the choir members, and after a lovely little solo 'Secret' by Grieg from Colin, we split into two choirs and performed Wood's 'Hail, Gladdening Light' from the back of the church. The second half began with a selection of Morley madrigals followed by the 'Choral Dances from Gloriana' by Britten. We finished the concert with the first four of Parry's 'Songs of Farewell'. A wonderful end to a super concert. Unfortunately, audience numbers were disappointing, however those that were there thoroughly enjoyed what they experienced and</p>

	<p>the choir were very pleased and proud of themselves to have learnt and performed such a varied program.</p> <p>The following week we had a 'social' gathering for cake and fizz at Rachel's new house which was a lovely event to celebrate the end of the choir year and get to know each other better. There was a happy and relaxed atmosphere which led to honest discussions about the choir and repertoire suggestions etc. A very successful little afternoon, one to repeat! The committee met in July and held good discussions about previous concerts and future plans etc, all very positive.</p> <p>Our new term has just started and we are working towards our December 'Advent' concert which will be held at St Mary's, Old Town on Sat 2nd December. We will be singing a wide selection of pieces including Rheinberger's 'Advent Motets', pieces by Lauridsen, Whitacre and Gjeilo and new pieces by Sheena Phillips (when we will be joined by a young flautist) and Jamie Hall. We will also be singing a couple of seasonal light-hearted favourites and hoping for a bit of audience participation!</p> <p>Unfortunately we have had a couple of choir members leave permanently due to relocation, serious illness, etc but we are delighted to have recruited several new members who have fitted in well and seem to be enjoying being a part of NWV.</p> <p>Rachel Shouksmith</p>
Phoenix	<p>It has been a good start to the term. We're doing a French programme this term with the Duruflé Requiem as the main item. The piece has its own challenges, but most are enjoying it or are being won over slowly. Some new members have joined us but sadly no tenors! Luckily our Dutch friends will again join us for the concert.</p> <p>Part of the rationale for this programme is to economise by having the organ as accompaniment instead of an orchestra. With a slowly declining membership and escalating concert costs, (venue hire fees particularly), budget is an increasing consideration in planning our programmes. We increased our subs again this year. Even though choir membership is still good value for money compared to some leisure pursuits there's a limit to how much we feel we can expect members to absorb extra costs.</p> <p>We're looking forward to the various Christmas events we have planned, and they should generate a little income. Still, all that aside we're enjoying our singing and singing with friends – the most important thing.</p> <p>Fiona Evans</p>

<p>Seaford Choral Society</p>	<p>The past year has been a very good year for the Society, with three well attended concerts and an almost instant charity concert at Easter. We have tackled a range of music, including Brahms Requiem, Mozart Vespers, Zelenka Miserere and an eclectic mix to celebrate the life of Queen Elizabeth II in the summer. Our summer concert included music by the local primary school and Seaford's very own bagpiper!</p> <p>Our numbers have continued to increase, with a handful of new members each term. Unfortunately we have sadly lost a few too, mainly due to the death, increasing age or illness of members or their partners. The tenors, in particular, have been affected with sometimes only three singers available!</p> <p>In the summer term our MD Colin decided it was time to move on, so we have been seeking a replacement. In the meantime we are lucky to have an excellent interim MD in Veronica, who is leading us for our Christmas concert in December. We are hoping to appoint a permanent MD next month to start in January. We're very excited to be entering a new phase for our choir!</p>
<p>Sussex Harmony</p>	<p>The quire – made up of about 20 singers and instrumentals met every week, except for a break in August. We performed twice, both times clad in Georgian costume. Firstly, we provided the music for a patronal evensong in the 12th century church of St Peter's, Preston Manor, Brighton. Our music, made up of metric hymns, anthems, canticles and a canon were chosen because of their Brighton and Sussex connections. Several had been composed by Nathaniel Cooke (1773-1827) who had been the organist at the parish church of St Nicholas, and for commercial reasons had the habit of naming his works after Sussex villages. Most of our other numbers had been transcribed from manuscripts found in places such as Ringmer near Lewes and Catsfield near Battle.</p> <p>Two weeks later we gave another Sussex themed rendition, this time to the East Grinstead Society in the far north of the county. We took the audience through the year with items appropriate to Easter, Pentecost, Harvest Festival and Christmas plus events such as a funeral and a wake, again using music composed or found in the county. Interspersed with the music were readings taken from such Sussex themed epistles as Bob Copper's <i>A Song for all Seasons</i> and <i>The Church Gallery Minstrels of Old Sussex</i> by the Rev. K.H.MacDermott.</p> <p>For an aural change, we had gleaned from the other side of the pond <i>The Easter Anthem</i> by William Billings of Boston, and his <i>Psalm 68</i>. Billings, born in 1760, was the first American choral composer. Printing of the psalm had been delayed until Billings could accumulate enough rags to make the paper in the United States, thus avoiding the pernicious taxes on imported British goods. We finished most inappropriately for a hot July night with a selection of Christmas carols</p>

	<p>with Sussex connections, most of which we had performed last winter in Brighton.</p> <p>We have now started practising for the Annual Old Ale celebrations for Harveys Brewery in Lewes, an advent service in Lewes and a carol concert in Brighton.</p> <p>Paula Nicholson</p>