

CHOIR REPORTS FOR EADCA MEETING: 22.4.23

Bexhill Choral Society	<p>Bexhill Choral's October concert of the Bizet <i>Te Deum</i> and Schubert <i>Mass in A flat</i> major had to be cancelled/postponed when our conductor came down with Covid a few days beforehand (not caught from choir!). We were able to postpone to February 2023 and were just in time to stop the programme print, but there was a lot of scurrying round trying to let people know, amending posters around town etc, and finally standing outside the door on the evening of the concert – fortunately only 12 people turned up unaware of the change and were all very nice about it. We had secured a £1000 grant from the Williams Church Music Trust for the concert and with the additional expense of postponement this was particularly welcome.</p> <p>We moved on to Christmas music for a very successful and well-attended concert in December, and a small group also sang at a local care home where a former member is a resident. We returned to Bizet and Schubert in January. After a few weeks of somewhat challenging rehearsals when some of us wondered if we should have cancelled instead of postponing, the choir rose to the occasion and delivered a very good performance.</p> <p>We are now busy rehearsing for a concert of short 'classics' (Baroque to the Beatles!) for May 13th. This was planned as a popular concert to attract a large audience, but unfortunately our usual large church venue St Barnabas double booked the date we thought we had, and we've had to move to a much smaller venue. Attendance at rehearsals has sometimes been reduced by flu, coughs/colds, grandparent duties and trips to the Antipodes, but it helps that a number of the pieces are well-known by most of the choir.</p> <p>On 17th June our conductor Ken Roberts is doing a fundraising lecture recital 'The Piano in the Parlour' (Victorian piano music), and he is also writing a new cantata - <i>Iseult</i> - for us to premiere in October!</p> <p>We currently have around 55 members, including some new members (mostly altos) but are still very short of basses.</p> <p>Jenny Meteyard</p>
Concentus	<p>We had a very successful Autumn term, welcoming several new members and ending with our usual Christmas Concerts in Seaford and Eastbourne.</p> <p>We were fortunate to be one of the choirs able to sing carols in December around the Christmas Tree in Trafalgar Square, watched by a large audience, many of whom sang along with us. Sadly, poor weather prevented us from Carol Singing in Old Town but we ended the year with a happy evening in a local pub.</p>

	<p>Last year we were able to donate £2,161.52 to our chosen charity – the Children With Cancer Fund, based in Willingdon. This year our chosen charity is Chestnut Tree House.</p> <p>At the beginning of this term we welcomed more new members who are making a great contribution to our team.</p> <p>During February we took over the La Locanda del Duca restaurant and held a most enjoyable and relaxed evening in sharing a fabulous meal together including entertainment between our members!</p> <p>Our next venture is again supporting the Children With Cancer Fund in us joining them on their float and singing our music along the seafront for the Eastbourne Carnival in May.</p> <p>From there we are very much looking forward to performing our June Summer Concerts in Seaford then Eastbourne.</p>
Downland Singers	<p>Our highlight (or one of them) was Christmas!</p> <p>We had our Christmas Gala early in December which was, as always, very successful. As before we performed after the Wealden Brass, so there was a lot of music-making that day.</p> <p>Unfortunately our booking with Signature did not materialise, but instead we secured a booking at a favourite and often-used venue – Bernhard Baron Cottage Homes. We had not been there for some time because of Covid. They were delighted to have us perform there again after a long gap.</p> <p>We also sang carols at Morrisons and raised around £200 for Children with Cancer.</p> <p>And a new activity – buying and decorating a Christmas Tree at St Mary’s Willingdon Christmas Tree Festival. This tree was much admired and we received some much needed publicity. We used the “Angel” theme and covered our tree with lots of Angels, made from recycled old sheet music.</p> <p>Then in the new term (and continuing) we have turned to Light Opera, with several songs including “Nessun Dorma” which requires Italian, and Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves (in English).</p> <p>We recently had an Open Evening which included a very much enjoyed social time.</p> <p>Sadly one of our longest standing members, Malcolm Gallini, died very recently. He had sung in the choir for at least 20 years and for the last two was our Treasurer.</p> <p>We sang as a choir at his funeral earlier this week.</p> <p>With some coming and going, we are still around 13 members with only two men. Therefore we live in hope for more recruits in the tenor and bass areas,</p> <p>We return to rehearsals on Thursday 20th April continuing with Light Opera songs for our Summer Concert on Thursday 8th June and will be holding our AGM on Thursday 22nd June.</p> <p>Rosemary Rowett, Chairman</p>

<p>Eastbourne Choral Society</p>	<p>Autumn term 2022 saw a number of new members for ECS, and membership has stayed at 70 – 75 throughout the Autumn and Spring terms.</p> <p>Our Britten St Nicolas concert in November, with some additional Advent items, was well received and much enjoyed by the choir. We were joined by five young ladies from Chichester Conservatoire who sang the semi chorus in St Nicolas from the top row of the staging to great effect – such lovely strong young voices.</p> <p>After this concert we embarked upon six Carol Singing events – all very different and all enjoyable, and so worthwhile for the charities, audiences and congregations involved:- All Souls Lunchtime carol service, Eastbourne Angels Civic carol service, Palm Court Care Home, Hawthorns Retirement Complex, Carol singing in the Beacon Centre in aid of The Samaritans and “Carols and Champagne” at The Star Hotel Alfriston on Christmas Eve.</p> <p>Last term (Jan -March) was joyous! We rehearsed a favourite – Mozart Requiem and learned a new piece by Haydn – Insane et Vanae Curae – a short, but a lively and enjoyable piece, which we all grew to love! We performed these two pieces for our March concert along with Mozart Laudate Dominum – always a favourite with audiences. The programme included the Mozart Clarinet Concerto played exquisitely by Alison Hughes from Lewes. The audience were wonderful, and the comments received since the concert have been amazing. It will be a hard act to follow, according to ECS members!</p> <p>We will do our best though, and this term will be singing some “lighter” music in the form of Nocturnes, waltzes and, to acknowledge the Coronation of King Charles, a section from Handel’s Coronation Anthems.</p> <p>Happy Singing Everyone!</p> <p>Liz Barker</p>
<p>Eastbourne Symphony Chorus</p>	<p>Some 70 singers from various local choirs and none joined with the ESO, led by Lisa Wigmore, for their annual choral concert in May 2022. Delayed from 2020 and 2021, there was a distinct buzz of excitement that, at last, we would be able to perform Haydn’s Creation. With soloists soprano Rachel Shouksmith, tenor Andrew Mackenzie-Wicks and bass Christopher Dixon under conductor Graham Jones, the concert was a rousing performance of one of the greats in the choral world.</p>
<p>Hailsham Choral</p>	<p>It’s been a good year so far for Hailsham Choral. We have just performed Samson by Handel, at All Saints in Eastbourne, which had</p>

	<p>been postponed from March 2020 because of the lockdown. Audience numbers were very healthy and with superb soloists and a great orchestra, it was a joyous and thrilling occasion. A special mention must go to our fabulous tenor soloist, Ben Hancox-Lachman, who sang the title role powerfully, sensitively and faultlessly, a great achievement for such a young singer. It has been great to welcome some 10 new members to our choir, who all took part in this rarely performed oratorio. Last November's concert, when we sang Haydn's Nelson Mass and Purcell's Funeral Sentences with orchestra and semi-choruses, was very appropriate after Her Majesty's funeral, and well received. Our Christmas concert, as always, was a joyful occasion, despite many singers having succumbed to various winter illnesses. The charity was Target Ovarian Cancer, which sadly two of our members have died of recently. I'm pleased to say we had a record collection for TOC. Our thoughts are turning now to a joint project with ESO singing Verdi's Requiem on 11 May 2024. We would like to include as many singers from other choirs in this event, which is why both Jozik Kotz, Hailsham's MD and John Thornley from ESO will be at the meeting. Our Summer concert will feature Gilbert and Sullivan, folksongs and other light repertoire.</p> <p>Milly Clark</p>
<p>Heathfield Choral Society</p>	<p>Heathfield Choral Society has had a productive start to the year. We finished 2022 with a Christmas concert made up of music from a variety of English composers, including Vaughan Williams, Gerald Finzi, Michael head and Bob Chilcott - quite an eclectic mix! We were supported by a boy treble, and the local Community College choir which was a rewarding collaboration that we hope will be repeated. The Finzi (In Terra Pax) was a piece unfamiliar to most in the choir, and although challenging it was a pleasure to learn a work from outside the usual Christmas canon. We also performed a number of Carol Services, including at a reception for the Lord Lieutenant of Sussex.</p> <p>This year we are rehearsing for our May concert, which will be Haydn's The Seasons. Having sung Creation a few years ago, it's good to return to some familiar harmonies and chord progressions! We have attracted several new members which is satisfying, but with the usual attrition due to people moving away we are stuck at around 75% of our pre-Covid numbers. From both a subs and ticket sales perspective this is something we need to rectify!</p>
<p>Noteworthy</p>	<p>September 2022 saw a change of leadership for Noteworthy Voices with MD Chris Dixon being replaced temporarily by Rachel Shouksmith. Rachel is an experienced local musician and quickly took to the challenge of choosing music and preparing the choir for our next concert on 19th November. Our theme was 'Sing Joyfully' and we sang a very successful concert in St Saviour's featuring music by English</p>

	<p>composers: Byrd, Tallis, Stanford, Elgar, Vaughan Williams' 3 Shakespeare Songs, madrigals and folk song arrangements. The concert was deemed a great success and everyone felt well prepared and positive about the term and the concert.</p> <p>The committee then held auditions and interviews for a more permanent MD and Rachel Shouksmith was appointed in December. A committee meeting and AGM followed in January with good attendance and rehearsals started for our next concert. On 26th Jan we were honoured to take part in the National Holocaust Memorial Day event in the Congress buildings. We sang 'God save our gracious King' and the Hebrew national anthem and a Hebrew round 'Shalom' (both in Hebrew). We were very well received and it was thought to be a very poignant and important event to be part of. 'Hallelujah' was the theme for our next concert on Sunday afternoon 26th March in St Mary's, with pieces often using the same text but contrasting ancient and modern music. Highlights included opening the concert with Rutter's 'Choral Fanfare', creating a stereophonic effect by placing the choir at opposite ends of the church for Wood's 'Hail gladdening light' and a bit of audience participation in a 4 part round version of the Hallelujah chorus! Again, a hugely enjoyable and successful concert.</p> <p>At the time of writing, we are just about to start rehearsals for our summer concert (June 17th in St Nicolas, Pevensey) with music to include Chilcott's 'Little Jazz Mass', Britten's 'Gloriana Dances' and Parry's 'Songs of Farewell'.</p> <p>Rachel Shouksmith 14/04/23</p>
Phoenix	<p>Since the autumn we have had some new members join and have some lovely compliments which is always great to hear.</p> <p>We celebrated our 20th anniversary in September with cake and bubbles. A few of us were there at the beginning when Cantamus merged with the Heritage Singers, myself included. It certainly doesn't seem like 20 years ago. We've seen quite a few changes over the years and the choir has gone from strength to strength. What will the next 20 years bring??</p> <p>Our Christmas events were a great this year – it was great to be back to normal – and we had a record number of singers at our events. We already have bookings for the coming Christmas.</p> <p>For our February concert we were again joined by Maastricht Phoenix. Their visit has now become a yearly event and it's lovely to see old friends each year. They of course also swell our bass, tenor and alto sections which is incredibly helpful. The programme included the Bach Magnificat, Vivaldi Gloria, a little known and very pretty Pergolesi piece - Laudate Pueri Dominum - which we all loved, and Telemann's Concerto</p>

	<p>for 3 trumpets, 2 oboes and timpani with period orchestra. Our patron Evelyn Tubb, having retired from singing, is now enjoying a change of direction and is our regular timpanist. Audience and choir alike thoroughly enjoyed the concert which was well attended despite our raising the ticket price to a new and experimental high of £20. We were delighted to receive great reviews.</p> <p>Like many local choirs it seems, we have opted for a variation on the Charles and coronation theme for our forthcoming June concert. Well – it was now or never, wasn't it?! Michael and his wife Ansy, both MDs have done some digging and gone for an eclectic mix of music to fit the theme which we are enjoying discovering.</p> <p>The ever-increasing costs of church hire and heating supplements for rehearsals and concerts continue to be a concern and we will need to review our annual subscription fee yet again. In a bid to conserve funds we plan to do a concert without an orchestra next winter and have opted for a shift away from Baroque (and our comfort zone) with the Duruflé Requiem but with the organ this time.</p> <p>Onwards and upwards as they say!</p> <p>Fiona Evans Chair – Phoenix Choir</p>
<p>Seaford Choral Society</p>	<p>September started with our AGM and a change of Chair, as Steve had completed five years in the post. Our new chair is Alison Mowbray. She is doing a fantastic job, ably assisted by Steve. Choir numbers are still not back to pre-covid levels but we are getting a few new members each term. We are asking people to be considerate and not come to rehearsals with a streaming cold and, so far, we have not had a covid outbreak.</p> <p>Following discussions at the last EADCA meeting we decided to increase both our subs and our ticket prices to help cover rising costs. Our autumn concert was Brahms' Requiem at St Leonard's Church. We had a good turnout and it went very well. A definite challenge for the choir though!</p> <p>For our Spring term concert we decided to resurrect Mozart's Vespers, which we'd almost been ready to perform just before Covid. We thought it would be relatively easy but were surprised how little we remembered! We also decided on Zelenka's Miserere to give us something different to do. If we thought the Brahms was a challenge this was another level! The second movement was a nightmare, and we were convinced we would never master it. But we did, except for a few minor lapses! We pushed the boat out for this concert and had a small orchestra and four soloists. It's certainly different singing with violins as opposed to a piano!</p>

	<p>Following this was our 'almost instant' concert on Good Friday where we were joined by others for a performance of Maunder's Olivet to Calvary. Not a piece known by many of us but, thankfully, quite easy to sing. This also raised a good sum for the Vicar's nominated charity.</p> <p>We've just started rehearsing for our summer concert which will be a tribute to HM Queen Elizabeth II. An eclectic mix of music covering the life of the Queen, everything from Zadok the Priest to Oklahoma! The children from the local primary school will be joining us again which should make for a fun concert!</p> <p>We are also planning on singing at the Coronation celebration event in Seaford.</p> <p>Carole Josey</p>
Sussex Harmony	<p>Sussex Harmony is a Lewes based quire of keen amateur singers and instrumentalists who keep alive the music that was performed in our rural churches and non-conformist chapels between 1700 – 1850. Our repertoire also includes secular items and Shape Note singing – the American derivative of the British West Gallery music.</p> <p>Last autumn, we ran workshops in Catsfield and Hailsham leading to Book of Common Prayer services in their churches. We attracted a total of about 30 singers and instrumentalists. We also provided the choir for Harveys Brewery's annual Old Ale thanksgiving service, as we have done for the past 15 years. Sadly, we provided a choir for the funeral of a longstanding member of Sussex Harmony.</p> <p>In December, we gave carol concerts interspersed with readings in Brighton and at Hurstpierpoint – both at venues where we had performed in previous years.</p> <p>Concerts etc. so far lined up for 2023 include a day of Sacred Harp singing in Lewes, a concert in East Grinstead, Harveys Old Ale service in Lewes and two carol themed concerts in Brighton and Lewes.</p>