

2019 September

BEXHILL CHORAL SOCIETY

Our May concert - Rutter's *Requiem* and *The Sprig of Thyme* (suite of folk-songs), and a piece by our own conductor Kenneth Roberts, *According to Thy Word* (a setting of the Nunc Dimittis in English) - went very well and got an enthusiastic response and good feedback from the audience. We have set up online ticketing with TicketSource after advice from EADCA members and did actually sell 3 through this.

In June Ken Roberts did another of his excellent fund-raising lecture-recitals which as usual was a sell-out. We're now rehearsing for our concert on 5th October – Beethoven's *Mass in C*, Schubert *Stabat Mater D175*, Mendelssohn *Hear My Prayer* and Mozart *Ave Verum*. A lot of work is still needed, particularly on the Beethoven!

In November we are holding a Singing Morning – open workshop – based around 'O Fortuna' from *Carmina Burana*, open to any local singers or would-be singers, and will also be having a fund-raising Quiz evening.

2019 September

CONCENTUS

Our spring term commenced beginning of January with 17 new members joining.

Concentus travelled East on 15th March to participate in the Hastings Music & Arts Festival and gave a credible performance in competing against 9 other choirs.

We were also very proud to be invited to sing in celebrating the opening of the Congress Theatre, Eastbourne on Sunday 24th March following the completion (well almost completed??) major refurbishment programme that had closed the centre for almost two years.

On Saturday 13th April we were invited to perform with Aled Jones at the Pavillion Theatre, Worthing singing songs on our own then backing Aled on two other songs. This was an incredible honour for us and an exciting event that will have lasting memories.

However our main focus was our June concerts which for the first time, was jointly performed with the championship contest band Lewes, Glynde and Beddingham Brass (LGBB) under the direction of their bandmaster Ian Stewart. This was a completely new venture for both groups in that Concentus has never performed with a brass band before and LGBB, although having previously played with smaller choirs, have never worked with such a large choir, nor specifically arranged their band parts to accord with the key signatures and medley choral arrangements of West End musicals, grand opera, spiritual and pop!

Our two summer concerts were performed in Seaford on Saturday 15th June and again in Eastbourne on Saturday 22nd June. Both concerts went exceptional well and both choir and band alike received highly positive feedback. Accordingly we have developed a wonderful bond and friendship with LGBB and we are planning towards performing another joint concert in June 2021.

Concentus was also very honoured to be the only choir to perform at the St Wilfred Hospice Charity Concert in the Hippodrome, Eastbourne on Thursday 18th July. However our excitement was definitely heightened in singing with Lesley Garrett following invitation to back her in within the two closing songs of her programme. Again being a long lasting memory for us all!

As a wind-down social event, Concentus enjoyed the pleasures of our annual BBQ giving members the opportunity to socialise with each other and share the memories and pleasures of a very busy and successful term together!

Concentus returned to rehearsals for the start of our new Autumn term on Monday 2nd September and are currently welcoming an intake of new members. Our main focus is our Christmas concerts in Seaford on Saturday 14th December than again in Eastbourne on Saturday 21st December.

However we are all very excited and proud in being invited to travel to London on Thursday 19th December and sing festive music and carols around the Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square!

A number of other local singing engagements are also being planned as we collectively sing our way towards Christmas!

So, 'it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas', as they say...and sing!!

2019 September

DOWNLAND SINGERS

The year began with rehearsals for our Easter programme – a service of music and readings for Holy Week. This was well received by audience and choir alike and a retiring collection was sent to “People Matter” in Eastbourne. The summer session proved challenging, mainly due to a lack of commitment by some members which caused very variable attendance at rehearsals.

For the first time in the choir's history it was agreed that the summer concert should be cancelled as numbers would be too low to present a good performance as for many the repertoire would not be known well enough to obtain concert standard.

We didn't want to penalise members who had attended rehearsals and learnt the repertoire and so it was decided to put on an informal evening with invitations going to family and friends to join us for the occasion. This proved a great success and the informality lent itself to including items which possibly wouldn't have made it on to a formal programme. Members were able to share their hidden talents for poetry writing as well as encouraging the audience to participate in the singing of partner songs.

At the AGM in July the choir succeeded in appointing a Chairman for the first time in 30 years– hurrah! This will help spread the workload between Jennie and the Committee and he has already made his mark by enhancing choir publicity.

Recruitment is an on-going problem and we are holding an Open Rehearsal on September 12th to encourage people to come along and see what happens at Downland Singers.

2019 September

EASTBOURNE CHORAL SOCIETY

Since our last meeting ECS have given two major concerts and enjoyed some social events too. The main piece for our Spring concert was Brahms Requiem, accompanied by Nick Houghton and Nancy Cooley on one piano. The Requiem was a challenge for us as, although we had sung the piece previously in English, this time it was performed in German. Despite some initial reservations by some choir members, this proved to be a great success and was much enjoyed by the choir and a good sized audience. As we wanted to have an interval and John prefers to perform the Requiem without a break, Nick Houghton, our accompanist, opened the proceedings with an organ solo - Bach Toccata and Fugue in D minor. We then sang Hear my Prayer/ Wings of a Dove. We were joined by two great soloists for the evening and all agreed it was a lovely event.

Our summer concert was by way of a complete contrast. We spent a great summer term rehearsing Mendelssohn – Elijah, and performed this with orchestra and soloists in July. Perhaps an unusual choice for a summer concert, the idea behind it being that it might attract singers and audience, as often in the summer months both tend to be fewer in number. This idea was a great success. We worked with a choir of nearly ninety during the term, with eighty- four singers actually taking part in the concert. Feedback on choir, orchestra and soloists has been great, and the audience, although not huge, were very appreciative. As always, a concert on a July evening in Eastbourne is up against much competition with so many things happening in the town.

Our new term starts on September 10th when we will be rehearsing Mozart Coronation Mass, Haydn Maria Theresa Mass and Zadok the Priest, for a concert with orchestra on 2nd November.

2019 EASTBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CHORUS

No reports 2019

2019 September HAILSHAM CHORAL

It seems a long time ago since we sang Haydn's Creation in March. A lot has happened since then. Our wonderful accompanist of 7 years, Colin Hughes, told us he would be resigning in the Autumn, as he was taking up a post at St Mary's Old Town to lead the choir there. As he is also MD for Seaford Choral, he felt he had no option but to resign. He has been an excellent accompanist for us, an outstanding musician and a good friend. So the hunt was on for a new accompanist.

Shortly after this bombshell, another one fell on HCS, when Jozik Kotz, our beloved MD, indicated his intention to leave. Because of family circumstances he needed time to travel and visit his far-flung family. Of course this meant we were looking for both an MD and an accompanist. The Committee spent a lot of time thinking through adverts, job descriptions and contract wordings and heaved a sigh of relief when Jozik told us he could stay on until the end of the year.

We went through a process of recruiting an accompanist, and in the end selected Kevin Atkin, a music teacher and excellent pianist, who will start for us in September.

We started the recruitment process for MD before the summer break and already have a very encouraging list of applicants. The deadline for applications is 22 September and we will audition during October. The new MD will start in January.

Our concerts went well, although we had a few nerve-wracking moments when the soprano soloist fell ill and cancelled a week before the concert. Jozik found another soprano to take her place, only for her to become ill on the Friday before the concert! We were so lucky to find a superb soloist, Helen Bailey, willing to sing at such short notice! She was amazing and in fact we have booked her for Samson next Spring.

We sang Maunder's Olivet to Calvary (thanks for lending the scores, Jennie!) on Good Friday at Hailsham Parish Church and had a good Summer concert on 29 June. Unfortunately Seaford Choral's concert clashed with ours despite ours having been on the EADCA website for the last year at least, and Colin felt he had to conduct Seaford rather than accompany HCS. We were very lucky to have Phoenix' excellent Gavin Stevens playing for us instead. The concert was not terribly well attended, possibly due to the heat that day, but was enjoyed by all who did come. As I write this, we will be singing Evensong at Chichester Cathedral on 31 August, something we are all looking forward to. We had a 'dress' rehearsal at St Mary's Old Town, which went really well, and we will have a few informal rehearsals before the day, so it should be a good event. Other plans include Hailsham Festival's Mayor's concert on 14 September and of course our

2019 September HEATHFIELD CHORAL SOCIETY

The first half of the year for Heathfield Choral Society was dominated by the selection of our new MD, after Brian announced he would be standing down in May. We shortlisted 5 candidates, and auditioned two, before offering the role to Sebastian Charles worth, which I'm happy to say he accepted. Despite this, we managed three very

successful concerts in the space of 5 months. In late February we sang in a fund raising concert in aid of East Hoathly church. This was very well attended, and an event we will be looking to repeat. Our main concert took place in early May, and marked the final performance under the baton of Brian Newman. We sang Brahms (?) (in English) with the *Camarata of London* using the chamber orchestra reduced score. This was a piece selected by Brian as it held particular emotional significance for him. The choir rose to the occasion, and a very moving and emotional evening was enjoyed by audience and participants alike as we bade farewell to our long standing MD. Finally, with just three rehearsals to prepare, a subset of the choir sang at Holy Cross Priory in mid-June, under the direction of our new MD, Sebastian. This was a repertoire of traditional choral society music and also some lighter material, and was very well received by residents and audience. The feedback from the choir about our new leader is universally positive, and we are feeling encouraged and optimistic about the future.

2019 September

LAUGHTON VILLAGES CHOIR

The LVC was known as the Laughton Village Choir, but in order to appear friendlier to those coming from surrounding villages, we have decided to call it the Local Villages Choir – still the LVC.

In June we gave a performance of excerpts of the Brahms Requiem (missing out movements 5 and 7) to a packed St Mary's Church, Barcombe, with William Hancox and Rachel Frier on the extremely expensively hired grand piano, and Jozik Kotz the baritone soloist.

The choir's numbers were swelled by Linda's other choir, The Clockhouse Singers (based in Forest Row), and a few extra Brahms enthusiasts...60 singers in all. Having spotted that other local choirs were also performing the Brahms we took largish parties to both the Eastbourne and the Heathfield performances, which we hugely enjoyed....and we were enormously grateful to both choirs for offering us a bulk discount. For some of our members it is novel attending classical concerts, and to go to one where they really knew the work was revelatory.

Our next concert is on Sunday October 27th at the All Saint's Centre Lewes in aid of the Lions Club. The programme will be a selection of movements from our favourite classical works, as well as a smattering of our usual close harmony standards. After Christmas we start the long climb towards a Mozart Requiem on June 28th.

The LVC's USP is to perform fewer concerts a year to allow plenty of time to really get to know the pieces. Seasoned choral singers reported to me what a revelation it was to work in such detail and to reach a point of such familiarity with the piece that their enjoyment and experience at the performance was hugely enhanced.

We do, however, have a severe shortage of male singers. We would be delighted to welcome any tenors and basses who fancy performing a Mozart Requiem. We rehearse on Monday evenings, 8.00-9.30 in Laughton Village Hall.

2019 September

PHOENIX CHOIR

After Mozart's Requiem in February we had a complete change and sang Rutter's *Feel the Spirit* and Michael's own *Midsummer Mass* in our June concert. The Rutter had some tricky corners but was hugely enjoyable to sing – a bit like a weekly therapy session! Michael's mass is deceptively difficult and took some perseverance to get under our belts but was a great sing with many different styles and influences bought to bear. Michael's other choir – the Fletching Singers - joined us here in Eastbourne for the performance. It gave a much appreciated boost to our numbers for a summer concert, especially with the extra tenors and basses so there were 80 odd of us with an orchestral accompaniment. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed singing the piece and it went down very well with the audience. We wished afterwards that we had recorded it! Michael of course was delighted - it was the best performance of his piece to date.

Up next is the Monteverdi Vespers – very different and definitely a challenge for us Vespers 'virgins' so some hard graft will be involved. We are holding a 'Sing and Discover Day' for this next week (14th Sept) mainly to recruit

additional singers but have already found that we're pretty much full. We have a wedding and the usual Christmas events to sing at along the way – all good fun and a bit of light relief!

2019 September

SEAFORD CHORAL SOCIETY

The choirs' singing year kicked off on Saturday 13 April with our spring concert in St Leonard's Church, as Colin Hughes likes the organ there! We performed Rossini's *Petite Messe Solonelle* to a near full house. This lovely work was a joy to rehearse and sing. We are proud to support local charities with our efforts and we have a retiring collection following each concert. This concert raised £400 for the Beachy Head Chaplaincy.

Following a decision to reinstate the annual 'Almost Instant' Good Friday come and sing in St Leonard's Church we were joined by guest singers to perform the ever loved Faure *Requiem*. As Colin had a prior engagement we were led on this occasion by Kevin White. The fantastic sum of £832 was raised following this event for the Waves Charity in Seaford.

Our post concert event after this term was a very enjoyable Quiz Night where teams racked their brains and pitted their wits with family and friends over drinks and a splendid buffet provided by members.

The summer term recommenced rehearsing early May and the summer concert was held on Saturday 29 June at Seaford Baptist Church. This 'light' fun incredibly warm evening concert featured a Disney medley and various short popular pieces chosen by Colin. Our chairman Steve Machan and his wife Christina again hosted a post concert garden party in their gorgeous garden in Steyne Road, which incidentally regularly opens to the public during the summer.

We returned to rehearsals on Monday this week. Our main work for November will be Rutter's *Magnificat*, the concert date being Saturday 30 November in Seaford Baptist Church.

Quote for Chairman: "I feel it has been a very successful year and we have, together with our MD, built in strength and numbers and we have much to feel proud of."

2019 September

SOUTH DOWNS SINGERS

Early in the year, following the departure of Louise Morris, we began rehearsing under the direction of Jane Pendry, getting ready for our Spring concert. This was performed in May, very successfully and to a large audience. However, due to circumstance beyond her control, Jane was forced to tender her resignation and so our last association with her was our Friends and Family concert and summer party in June. We immediately set about trying to find a replacement for September. In the meantime, we sang at Rushlake Green for their Proms on the Green event, also at an American wedding in Dallington, and a couple of funerals. Meanwhile, the search for a new musical Director continued. We have been fortunate to engage a young man, James Aburn, who joined us on 5th September for our first of two rehearsals for the Hailsham Festival, after which we shall concentrate on preparing for our Christmas concert. This will be at 3:30pm on Saturday 14th December at St. John's Church, Polegate. We do not yet know what the programme will comprise.