

February 2020 BEXHILL CHORAL SOCIETY

Our concert on 5th October – Beethoven's Mass in C, Schubert Stabat Mater D175, Mendelssohn Hear My Prayer and Mozart Ave Verum caused some anxiety, particularly the Beethoven, but in the event it went extremely well and was well-received. One of our members has a son who is a recording engineer; he recorded the concert for us and we were pleasantly surprised at how good we sounded!

In November we held an open Singing Morning workshop based around 'O Fortuna' from Carmina Burana, with the aim of attracting potential audience members and perhaps a few new members. It was somewhat nail-biting as people booked very late, but we did end up with a good number and might have had a few more on the door if it hadn't been spectacularly horrible weather! It was very well received and hopefully raised our profile. We also held a very popular fund-raising Quiz evening and our Christmas concert had an audience of 175 despite clashing with a couple of other events in the town.

We also have 12 new members, which is encouraging.

February 2020 CONCENTUS

Our Autumn term was a very busy one for Concentus.

In October we enjoyed a trip to the Haymarket Theatre to see Phantom of the Opera.

As well as rehearsing for our two Christmas Concerts, we were privileged to be asked to sing in The Beacon, at Seaford Magic, and at the Eastbourne Christmas Cracker event. We were particularly excited to be asked to sing carols by the tree in Trafalgar Square. We were pleased to see the many people who stopped to listen to us and to join in with the singing. We were joined by representatives from the charity Help the Heroes and raised £326.34.

The Christmas concerts were very successful. Although Adrian had to have a second operation in November, the choir was well supported by Louise, our Assistant Musical Director and Jo, our Assistant Conductor. After all our events, we were very pleased to have raised over £1,000 in the continued support of our chosen charity, the JPK Project.

Sadly, our accompanist of two years, Anthony Wilson, was unable to continue with us after Christmas due to other commitments. Naturally we are devastated to be losing him as he is such an accomplished musician and accompanist. We are now looking for a new accompanist and we would appreciate the name of anyone we might contact.

February 2020 DOWNLAND SINGERS

The Christmas season was a busy time for the choir, with our successful annual Gala with Wealden Brass at Trinity Church, followed by carol singing in the Beacon Centre and at Bernhard Baron Cottage Homes.

Recruitment continues to cause concern – while the soprano line is full, we currently have vacancies in all the remaining sections. The Alto line seems to have been hit hardest with the loss of several members over the period. The workshop held in September brought one new member but overall there has been little interest. Our challenge is to review our recruitment and publicity processes.

February 2020 EASTBOURNE CHORAL SOCIETY

We held our Autumn concert slightly earlier last year in order for us to be able to put a little more into our Charity Christmas concert. For the concert in November we sang Mozart Coronation Mass and Haydn Maria Theresa Mass. It was quite a challenge for some of the choir to learn both pieces in the short rehearsal period, but everyone enjoyed the performance and audience seemed to particularly like the Haydn. Our appreciation of this piece was enhanced by a talk given by Suzie Wilkins, one of our choir members, one October evening, which was well illustrated, informative and in parts amusing.

The fish and chips beforehand also went down well!

December was for us, as for most choirs, very busy. We gave a Christmas concert to support Chestnut Tree House in All Saints' Church. We sang part one of Messiah, for which we were joined by some excellent student soloists from the University of Chichester Conservatoire. The second part of the concert comprised carols for choir and audience with, again, some lovely contributions from the students.

We made our annual appearance at All Souls' lunch time carol service, which has grown in popularity audience wise over the years, and has become a firm favourite with ECS members. We are always made to feel so welcome and we enjoy leading the well known carols that are included in the service. It's a good sing!!

We sang carols in the Beacon shopping centre in aid of the Eastbourne branch of the Samaritans. The volunteers who came to take up the collection were delightful to work with and were thrilled by the fact that during our forty minutes of singing they collected they collected over £500. Carolling continued throughout the month - in a care home and at the Hadleigh hotel and we also found time to have a choir Christmas meal in Solo Pasta.

This new term has started with a few new members joining us, and last Saturday, a very enjoyable Sing and Discover Day on the St John Passion. The day was led by John Hancorn and, the writer and broadcaster, Richard Wigmore. Richard is an engaging speaker and has a wealth of musical knowledge. His talk was interspersed with singing expertly led by John and accompanied by Nancy Cooley, who is an excellent choral accompanist. All this, with plenty of cake and tea, made for a very enjoyable day.

February 2020 HAILSHAM CHORAL

It's been a very busy six months since our last report. First of all we have gone through a recruitment process for a new MD, sorted through some 12 serious applications, interviewed four applicants and finally appointed Rosie Howarth, who started on 1 January. She is an experienced and enthusiastic conductor. She recently moved from Wales, and now lives in London. We are excited to start the new decade with Rosie at the helm. Of course, this meant we were saying goodbye to our much-loved Jozik Kotz, who, after 13 very successful years, will be sorely missed. He conducted his last major concert with us in Eastbourne in November, when we sang Vivaldi's Gloria, Fauré's Requiem and Haydn's Te Deum. It was a well-attended concert, with Jozik singing the baritone solo and two choir members, Fiona Mansfield and Rachel Chilton, singing the other solos. Jozik also conducted at our Christmas concerts, one at the Observatory in Herstmonceux (very cold!) and at the Hailsham Parish Church where we supported Fegans as our annual charity. We had a lovely farewell party for him afterwards. We are also very grateful to Jozik for making all the

bookings for Samson, which we are singing on 28 March 2020. We will have Helen Bailey (who stepped in superbly at the last minute for our last Spring concert, the Creation), Becky Anstey, Andrew Wicks and Jozik as soloists.

Things did not work out with our new accompanist, Kevin Atkin, who started in September. He is a soloist rather than an accompanist. He resigned, quite suddenly, before the end of his probationary period and left us without an accompanist two weeks before our first Christmas event. We were delighted when David Moore agreed to play and he was a wonderful accompanist, both on the piano and on the organ at the church. Unfortunately he was not able to make this a permanent position, so the search for an accompanist was on again. We are very pleased to announce that Will Hancox has now agreed to be our new accompanist! He is well known in the area and has played before for us.

So the new decade starts for HCS with a new MD, new accompanist and a few new members too.

February 2020 HEATHFIELD CHORAL SOCIETY

In December we had our first full concert with our new MD, Sebastian Charlesworth. This was a potpourri of seasonal works, of which the main work was Rutter's largely unknown song cycle "When Icicles Hang". This is an early Rutter composition, very different from his later work, and somewhat challenging to sing! The choir took a bit of time to get used to the dissonance of some of the chord progressions, but as is so often the case, by the performance, everyone loved it. The concert itself was a great success, with many long term supporters commenting on how the choir had developed in the short time Seb has been in charge. Seb even brought his own orchestra, and although we were very happy with the Camerata of London for many years, we were delighted with the step up in quality this change brought. In later December, a subset of the choir sang at Heathfield's Christmas lights ceremony, organised by the Parish Council. Again, lots of positive feedback, and we hope to make this an annual event. Membership is holding up well. We had expected to lose some members during the MD transition, but this appears not to have been the case. In fact we are currently pretty much at the maximum we can cope with at our rehearsal venue, so are having to run a waiting list for some voice parts.

The other main event of the term so far is that we took part in a BBC recording and filming for a programme to be broadcast later in the year. This was a fascinating and enjoyable process, albeit somewhat tedious at times – it was a very long day!

February 2020 PHOENIX CHOIR

Our work for the last season has been the Monteverdi Vespers of 1610. We began the season back in September with a workshop on the Vespers which proved popular, attracting a good number of folk, and some new recruits too. It also set the context nicely for this great work.

We used the Clifford Bartlett red book edition which was an education in itself as the scoring is not so straight forward and was also quite poignant as Clifford died in August. It took quite a long time for many of us to really warm to the piece and the altos especially had their work cut out. Some fell by the wayside but most persevered admirably with lots of extra practice. Our patron, Evelyn Tubb who sang soprano solo for us, said this piece is a slow burn but that usually once having performed it everyone is a huge fan. This certainly proved to be the case with us too.

The concert sold itself since the Vespers is seldom sung in these parts and is such an iconic work. The church was near to capacity – all the better for the coffers. This was not a cheap concert to put on. The soloists and period musicians were just fantastic and the choir rose to the task as they always do. Thankfully in the furore of the piece (it is like a bare-knuckle ride!) any mistakes were only obvious to us! Singers and audience alike – had a brilliant evening. There has been nothing but praise from all who were there so we are of course delighted.

In December 2019 we again sang carols at a mixture of fundraising and paid events.

February 2020 SEAFORD CHORAL SOCIETY

Our autumn term rehearsals recommenced in September 2019 with the welcome appearance of several new members. At the end of November for our main work we performed John Rutter's 'Magnificat' in Seaford Baptist Church. The soprano soloist was from within our own ranks, Bethany Geoghehan, an extremely talented young soprano and violinist, presently studying music in the local area. She delighted us all with her clear, young resonant voice, perfect for the Rutter work. The second half of the concert were short pieces chosen by our MD Colin Hughes from the Oxford 'European Sacred Music' collection and also a setting of 'The Lord's Prayer' by the husband of one of our altos, Chris Whitelaw. We were very pleased to be able to perform music with a local theme.

Not the biggest audience we have had, we nevertheless were able to collect £416 for the local foodbank Seahaven Storehouse.

The following Monday evening in early December the choir members gathered in St Thomas More RC Church Hall for our customary after concert party, an event always well attended and very enjoyable. We were joined by Colin and his fiancée Rebecca Anstey who also led the choir at Seaford's Christmas Magic event in the town, the following weekend. This now annual event is a seasonal celebration in the town when local choirs, groups, singers entertain the locals outdoors for a few hours on a chilly Saturday morning.

Rehearsals are now well under way for the spring concert on 21 March at Seaford Baptist Church when we perform from Mozart's 'Solemn Vespers' together with Purcell's 'Come, Ye Sons of Art, Away', happily accompanied by a Chamber Orchestra. Again, we welcomed more new members, greatly pleasing our chairman and committee - more replanning of seating arrangements for our concert manager, but as Colin says, a very nice problem to have.

February 2020 SOUTH DOWNS SINGERS

Last term we welcomed a new MD James Aburn, who has adapted very well, and is directing the choir with much enthusiasm, and is very well received.

Our Christmas concert was in aid of You Raise me Up, and we were delighted to be in a position to donate £500 to the charity.

We are delighted to say we still have a very good working relationship with Bede's senior music department, with the director of music Robert Scamardella as our accompanist.

We are very happy with the standard that the choir is performing, and we are happy with the number of members that we have.