

## CHOIR REPORTS FOR EADCA MEETING: 2.3.24

<p>Bexhill Choral Society</p>	<p>Bexhill Choral's October concert, featuring a brand-new cantata for choir and soprano soloist, <i>Iseult</i>, composed by our conductor Kenneth Roberts, sadly had to be postponed when the crucial soloist went down with Covid the day before and was unable to sing. For a new and quite challenging piece it wasn't possible of course to find a substitute at 24 hours' notice! So for the second year running our October concert was postponed, to February 4th. Meanwhile we had a very successful and enjoyable Christmas concert, with 240 tickets sold, We also sang at a care home and provided a small choir to sing Christmas music in the foyer of the De La Warr Pavilion, before a concert by Hastings Sinfonia.</p> <p>In January we spent 5 weeks dusting off <i>Iseult</i> and the other pieces (Sullivan's <i>King Arthur</i> and Holst's <i>Psalm 86</i>) from October, and we definitely felt the additional 5 rehearsals had been very helpful! Members agreed they were more confident and thought it had gone much better than if we'd done it in October. We had some very enthusiastic feedback from the audience and had a lovely Facebook review from the Vice Chair of Rother District Council. The concert was video recorded and we await this in some trepidation...</p> <p>The postponement of what was already quite a costly concert meant our finances took quite a hit (as well as meaning a lot of extra work), and we are now looking into grants, sponsorship and other forms of additional revenue with rather more urgency. We are very lucky that our conductor is happy to put on an annual fundraising 'lecture recital' each June – <i>Piano at the Movies</i> this year - and next week we're holding a fundraising Quiz evening.</p> <p>We currently have 60 members, with 5 or 6 new members who joined after the February concert, but still a shortage of basses. Our next concert is on May 18<sup>th</sup> with a rather less challenging programme of Vivaldi's <i>Gloria</i> and <i>Beatus Vir</i>, and Pergolesi's <i>Stabat Mater</i>. We are thinking of holding a Singing Morning open workshop in the autumn where we invite people to come and 'have a go' at a well-known piece – this has previously helped to grow both the audience and the choir.</p> <p>Jenny Meteyard, Secretary</p>
<p>Concentus</p>	<p>In December we performed our Christmas Concerts in Seaford and Eastbourne and were pleased to welcome a large audience on both occasions. Our programme this time included 'Highland Cathedral' accompanied by a piper in full regalia. Members also sang carols with residents at Millfield Court and around Old Town one cold evening.</p> <p>Over the past year we raised over £2,600 for Chestnut Tree House and our chosen charity for this year is Downs Syndrome Development Trust, an organisation very close to one of our members.</p>

	<p>This term we have again welcomed several new members and we are now working towards our Summer concerts in June.</p>
<p>Downland Singers</p>	<p>It seems a long time ago now but our Christmas season was both a great success and much enjoyed by our members.</p> <p>We began at the beginning of December with the annual Christmas Gala, joining with Wealden Brass at Trinity Church. It was wonderful, following lockdown restrictions, to be able to return to the format of having the band and choir performing alternately and to be able to chat together over tea and mince pies in the interval!</p> <p>This was followed by Carol Singing at Morrisons in Eastbourne where we were well received and raised just over £75 in one hour – for the first time it was agreed that this should go to choir funds which were somewhat depleted.</p> <p>A varied programme of festive music was enjoyed by the residents at Bernhard Baron Care Home and our final performance was at the Carol Service held at St. Simon &amp; St. Jude, East Dean. The latter was another first for us and, although the choir was very depleted due to illness, they sang their hearts out and were much appreciated.</p> <p>We again decorated a tree for the St. Mary's, Willingdon, Christmas Tree Festival – this not only challenged our creativity but also gave the opportunity for those decorating to meet up and chat as they worked!</p> <p>Having returned to rehearsals this year we are spending time looking at some of our well-loved pieces as well as learning new songs. There are some exciting opportunities in the pipe-line – but more on that next time!</p> <p>Jennie Macfadyen</p>
<p>Eastbourne Choral Society</p>	<p>Since our last meeting, we performed part one of Handel Alexander's Feast and Puccini Messa di Gloria for our Autumn concert. Such contrasting pieces, but both were very well received by our audience and much enjoyed by the choir. We held the concert at an unusual time for ECS – 4pm. The people that attended were pleased with being able to at least leave home in the daylight, but of course we don't know about any who couldn't come along because it wasn't in the evening. The size of audience was about the same as we always have for that time of year.</p> <p>This was followed by our usual round of carol singing in care homes, the Beacon Centre, All Souls' lunch time carol service and finally The Star Hotel Alfriston on Christmas Eve. All the events were most enjoyable in their own way, giving singers a chance to socialise, as well raise money for charities and choir, and sing for the pleasure of others.</p> <p>2024 so far has seen quite a few changes in membership for the choir. Some of our more senior members have left for health reasons and/ or</p>

	<p>not wanting to drive in the dark evenings. Whilst we have welcomed some lovely new members, and some more returning, this has had an impact on our soprano section, in particular. As I am sure everyone appreciates, Messiah, which we are preparing for our concert on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, is a big sing, especially for the sopranos. However, our membership has reached just over seventy for the first time since Covid, and the lively, challenging rehearsals that John and Nick are leading, bodes well for a lovely concert. We just hope everyone keeps healthy! Thanks to some generous additional funding from the Richard Lewis Trust, we are looking forward to singing with an orchestra and some great soloists.</p> <p>Over the last few months ECS has encountered rising costs for rehearsal and concert venues, and for musicians. We have held some enjoyable fund-raising events – A wine tasting and quiz evening, a bottle Tombola, and a talk on Messiah from one of our expert choir members preceded by a fish and chips supper. It would be interesting to hear how other choirs are faring with cost issues and fund raising.</p> <p>Meanwhile, I hope everyone in the Association is having as enjoyable term as we are, singing Messiah, one of the greatest choral pieces.</p>
<p>Eastbourne Symphony Chorus</p>	<p>We have some 80 singers who are singing with Hailsham Choral and their rehearsals for Verdi Requiem start on 2 March. The concert is on 11 May at St Saviour’s Church.</p>
<p>Hailsham Choral</p>	<p>Our Autumn concert, Rossini’s Petite Messe Solennelle, which we performed at St Saviour’s Church, was musically speaking a great success. The piano there has a beautiful sound and the acoustics in the church are wonderful. The choir was on good form! We had a sizeable and appreciative audience, and Carol Mounter gave us a good write-up. It was a more expensive venue than All Saints’ and the lighting was very poor - I understand that has been resolved now. We had hoped to have members of Bader College in Herstmonceux joining us, and initially about 10 came to our rehearsals, but unfortunately because of the College having to close, most went home to Canada, and only three remained and joined in the concert. It was a great idea, but it didn’t work out unfortunately.</p> <p>Christmas provided the usual opportunities for singing in the community, which we did around Hailsham. The concert at Hailsham Parish Church was in aid of Pancreatic Cancer. It was very well attended and enjoyed by all.</p> <p>We are now looking forward to singing Verdi’s Requiem on 11 May, also at St Saviour’s, a collaboration between Eastbourne Symphony Orchestra and Hailsham Choral. Some 80 singers from other choirs are joining us, so altogether there will be about 140 singers. It will be a</p>

	<p>fabulous event, logistically challenging of course, but working together with John Thornley is a privilege. Hailsham Choral has invited all other singers to join them at their weekly rehearsals, which a number have done. It is wonderful to really get to grips with the music as Jozik is a great teacher as well as a professional singer. I hope you will all come and listen on 11 May!</p> <p>Milly Clark</p>
<p>Heathfield Choral Society</p>	
<p>Noteworthy</p>	<p>Last Autumn we worked on our pieces ready for our Advent concert on 2<sup>nd</sup> December at St Mary's Church, Old Town. We performed the Rheinberger Advent Motets interspersed by other suitable pieces such as Gaudete, Northern Lights (Gjeilo), Bethlehem Down (Warlock), O Magnum Mysterium (Lauridsen), The Christmas Bird (Sheena Phillips – with young Flutist playing from the pulpit) and O Nata Lux (Jamie W Hall – written and performed in aid of Cancer Research charity). We finished with 12 Days of Christmas (with audience participation!) and It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year. Fantastic feedback from our audience, and we were extremely pleased with the audience numbers given the horrendous freezing fog and icy conditions at the time! This concert was the first time we had used Try Booking.com for upfront tickets sales and it has proved to be very easy to use and useful – a great success which we are now using for every concert.</p> <p>Later on in December we all came together with our partners for a Christmas meal at Pomodoro e Mozzarella. This was a lovely evening celebrating friendships and common interests and was enhanced by a fun quiz!</p> <p>We are now working towards our next concert which is at St John's on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March – a performance of Captain Noah and his Floating Zoo with St Andrew's Middles Choir joining us. Great fun, both choirs are enjoying learning (or revisiting) the music. NWV will also sing George Shearing's Songs and Sonnets before joining with the children again for Like a Rainbow Shining by Will Todd. All looking forward to an exciting concert.</p> <p>Future plans involve our next concert at Holy Trinity church as part of their Flower Festival weekend in June and we are planning a big celebratory concert for the choir's 10 year anniversary in November where all previous members will be invited to come and join us sing.</p> <p>Rachel Shouksmith</p>
<p>Phoenix</p>	<p>The last term was a good one. We had some very enjoyable and successful Christmas carolling events and social events. Our</p>

	<p>membership stayed fairly consistent, despite illness and accidents. I'm pleased to say our winter concert, a French programme including Duruflé's Requiem, went very well and we had a pleasing number in the audience. We were accompanied by the organ this time which can be very 'nebulous' in this piece. It was great to have our Dutch friends join us again -suddenly we had a sizeable tenor and bass section, but they had not been able to rehearse with an accompaniment. There was much acclimatising to be done with the two choirs, the organ accompaniment, and timing challenges on concert day but having the piano helped and we were very pleased with how it came together. It is a beautiful piece to sing.</p> <p>We have just started our summer programme. This term has a very different feel and includes Chilcott's Little Jazz Mass. It isn't to everyone's taste but there haven't been too many grumbles so far! Some had already decided to pursue other summer activities (or have very annoyingly double booked themselves on concert day, despite our best efforts to avoid this) So we are a considerably reduced choir this summer. Our tenor section now consists of one! I have a special request/invitation on behalf of Phoenix - if you have any tenors who would like to join us to sing some jazz over the summer term, they would be most welcome - special rates apply!</p> <p>There's the possibility that we will be moving to pastures new for our rehearsal venue in the next few months - not a decision taken lightly but one that's been brewing for some time. Onwards and upwards!</p> <p>Fiona Evans</p>
<p>Seaford Choral Society</p>	<p>It was an interesting autumn term for us as the first part of the term was spent appointing a new music director to replace Colin Hughes. We had good interest in the position and eventually managed to whittle it down to a shortlist of four. Each of these was invited for interview and then to take a twenty minute rehearsal with the choir. This left us with an even shorter list of two from which, after further interviews, we are pleased to have appointed Chris Dixon, who started with us in January.</p> <p>We are very fortunate to have in our midst Veronica Fewkes, who previously worked as director of music at Roedean School; she was happy to lead the choir for our autumn/Christmas concert which was a great success! We sang the first part of Messiah followed by an eclectic mix of Christmas music with the help of a six piece string/ brass / piano ensemble.</p> <p>We are currently rehearsing for our spring concert on 23 March which includes Mozart's Requiem and a chamber choir (part of our main choir) performing some sacred motets. We're really pushing the boat out for</p>

	<p>this one with a fifteen piece orchestra and soloists. It should be amazing!</p> <p>As usual we will also be singing in our 'almost instant' concert on Good Friday, when we will be performing Faure's Requiem. This is open to singers from elsewhere too. Details are on our website if anyone would like to join us. (There are rehearsals in the afternoon of 2 March, the evening of 25 March, and on Good Friday afternoon.)</p> <p>Carole Josey</p>
Sussex Harmony	<p>In October 2023, we once again led the music in the packed 12<sup>th</sup> century church of St Thomas a Beckett, Lewes for the annual celebration by Harveys' brewery of the first brew of their Old Ale. As the brewery were calling the tune- as well as supplying free beer and lunch – we sang traditional harvest festival hymns but managed to inject several 4-part metric versions of psalms that had been found in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Sussex parish choir books.</p> <p>In November, we had an appreciative audience in St Thomas' for an Advent Carol Service of Nine lessons and carols. The mix of traditional carols and West Gallery ones evidently hit the mark as evidenced by a letter from the vicar, inviting us back this year. Later in the week, the venue was Greyfriars, a very warm and welcoming upmarket retirement complex where our 94-year-old clarinetist lives. We gave the residents a short carol concert before some zimmered off to bed with their Horlicks while others joined us in wine and seasonal nibbles. Interspersed with some seasonal readings we included a short anthem found in a Ringmer manuscript plus carols collected by the folk song collector Lucy Broadwood from Sam Willett, the singing baker of Cuckfield – I kid you not.</p> <p>A bigger and even more appreciative audience packed the 12<sup>th</sup> century church of St Peter at Preston Manor, Brighton for our annual carol concert. We sang a collection of West Gallery carols including hymns by a very competent 19<sup>th</sup> century Sussex composer born and buried in Bosham, and others found in a manuscript book at Tarring, near Worthing. As some of the congregation had grown up in the folk song revival movement that was very active in 1960's Brighton, they joined "lustily and with great courage" with their own harmonies to several carols.</p> <p>We have five confirmed bookings for the rest of the year in Lewes and Brighton a well as Rushlake Green's Little Arts Festival. We also hope to organise a tour of several West Sussex villages which gave their name to metric psalms composed by the prolific composer Nathaniel Cooke.</p> <p>Paula Nicholson</p>

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